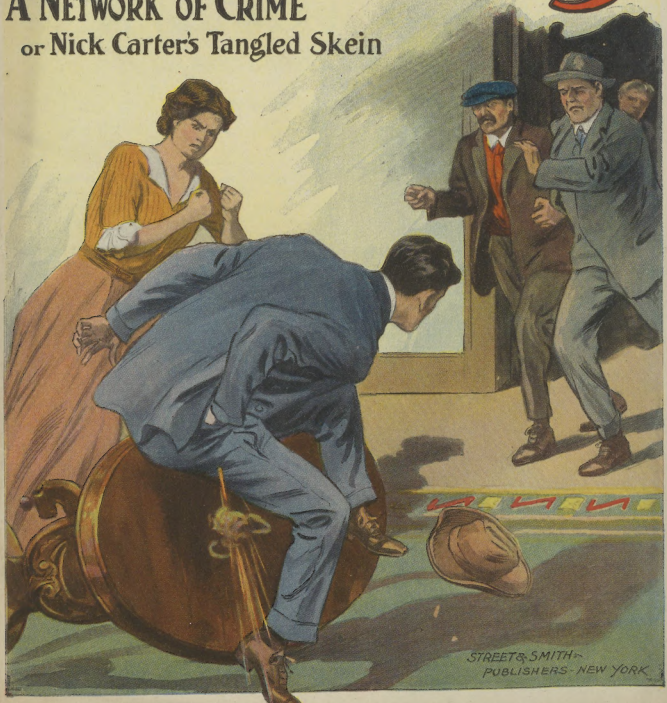
No. 149 JULY 17, 1915 5 CENTS

Nick Carter Stories

A Network of Crime
or Nick Carter's Tangled Skein



NICK CARTER STORIES

Issued Weekly. Entered as Second-class Matter at the New York Post Office, by STREET & SMITH, 79-89 *Seventh Ave., New York.*

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No. 149. NEW YORK, July 17, 1915. **Price Five Cents.**

A NETWORK OF CRIME;

Or, NICK CARTER'S TANGLED SKEIN.

Edited by CHICKERING CARTER.

CHAPTER I.

A DOUBLE MURDER.

"Hello! hello! This is Frank Mantell talking. I want Mr. Carter—Nick Carter. Is he there?"

Patsy Garvan, the detective's junior assistant, then alone in the library of Nick's Madison Avenue residence, was the recipient of the above telephone communication. It came over the wire in tones reflecting the haste and excitement of the speaker.

Patsy remembered him, a son of the senior partner of the firm of Mantell & Goulard, whose big department store in Sixth Avenue had recently been wrecked by a long series of mysterious robberies committed by the junior partner, Gaston Goulard, resulting in a round-up of the criminal and his confederates by Nick and his assistants, all of which had transpired several months before.

"No," Patsy replied. "Nick Carter is not here. He is out on a case."

"Is Chick Carter there?" Mantell then hurriedly asked, referring to the detective's chief assistant.

"He is not, Mr. Mantell. This is Garvan talking."

"Ah, yes, Patsy—I remember," was the reply. "When will Nick return?"

"I don't know. He went with Chick about an hour ago to investigate a big murder case in Manhattanville. He may not return until evening."

"Dear me, I'm sorry to hear that. I am very anxious to see him."

"On business?"

"Yes. Very important business. There is half a million dollars involved."

"Great Scott! Can I be of any help to you?"

"Not unless you can enable me to see Nick himself. Time is very valuable."

"I can do that, perhaps," said Patsy. "I can learn from police headquarters just where he has gone. You can go there and see him, or—where are you phoning from, Mr. Mantell?"

"From the office of Gray's wharf, East River. I cannot explain by telephone. If——"

"One moment," Patsy interrupted. "Have you a taxi?"

"I have my touring car."

"Good enough! Join me here as quickly as possible. I'll find out in the meantime where Nick is engaged. We'll go there and see him."

"Thanks, Garvan, a thousand times. I'll be with you in ten minutes."

It then was about ten o'clock in the morning. One hour earlier, complying with an urgent telephone request from the police headquarters, Nick Carter and Chick arrived in the detective's touring car at a dwelling in one of the outskirts of Manhattanville, the scene of a shocking crime evidently committed the previous night.

It was an attractive wooden house somewhat back from the street and occupying a corner lot.

It was in a quiet and entirely reputable locality, though somewhat thinly settled, and it was about the last neighborhood in which such a crime would have been expected.

More than a score of people had collected on the opposite side of the street, and were viewing the house with feelings of morbid curiosity. They were prevented from coming nearer, however, or encroaching upon the surrounding grounds, by policemen who had been stationed on both the front and side gates.

A police sergeant who was standing with an elderly man on the front veranda recognized the two detectives when the touring car stopped at the house, and he beckoned for them to enter that way.

"We have been waiting for you, Mr. Carter," he said respectfully, when Nick came up the gravel walk with Chick. "This is Doctor Boyden, who lives in the third house from here. I sent for him a few minutes ago,

thinking you might want his opinion as to the length of time the two men have been dead, as well as any other information he can give you."

"There certainly is a deep mystery here, aside from the shocking crime, Mr. Carter, judging from the appearance of things in the house," said the physician, after shaking hands with both detectives. "It looks like a veritable slaughter pen. There must have been an awful fight here."

"Come in, Mr. Carter, and see for yourself," added the sergeant.

"One moment, Kennedy," said Nick, detaining him. "Who lives in the house? I see that the name plate has been removed from the door."

"I can answer that question for you better than Sergeant Kennedy, perhaps," put in Doctor Boyden.

"If you please, then."

"The house is owned by Mr. George Roland, who occupied it with his wife until about a month ago. She died quite suddenly at that time, and Roland since has been living with a married sister in Harlem."

"Leaving this house vacant?"

"Yes. He owns it and the furnishings, however, and it has been in the market to rent. I noticed yesterday that the broker's placard had been removed from the front window, and I inferred that the house had been rented."

"Are you acquainted with Roland?" Nick inquired.

"Yes, indeed, very well acquainted."

"Is he a man of good character?"

"Excellent. I consider him incapable of crime."

"Do you know anything about the new tenants, or whether this furnished house has really been rented?"

"I think it has, sir," said Sergeant Kennedy. "I used the telephone in the next house, Mr Carter, and talked with the broker, Mr. Gibson."

"What did you learn?"

"He stated that he showed the house day before yesterday to a couple who claimed to be Mr. and Mrs. Charles Greenleaf, of Brooklyn. They did not then decide to rent the house, but they called at his office again yesterday afternoon and requested the privilege of taking the key until this morning, stating that they wanted to show the dwelling to a relative who lives with them, and whose business would prevent him from visiting the house except in the evening. Gibson was favorably impressed with the couple. He let the man have the key, with an understanding that it would be returned to-day, and——"

"And the rascals got in their work," Nick interrupted, with some dryness. "This looks very much as if the furnished house was craftily obtained only in order to pull off a knavish job of some kind."

"Surely," said Chick, with a nod. "That's just about the size of it."

"The job was pulled off, all right," replied the sergeant. "Come in, Mr. Carter, and see for yourself."

"Presently." Nick still detained him. "I first want to learn what is known about the crime. Who discovered it?"

"A milkman who called at the house in the rear of this one about an hour ago," said Kennedy. "He saw an old slouch hat in the back yard, near the fence that divides the two lots. He went and picked it up and found fresh spots of blood on it."

"And then?"

"Looking over the rear fence, he then saw that the back door of this house was wide open," Kennedy continued. "He could see no one, however, and knew that the house had not been occupied for a month. He then suspected there was something wrong, and he decided to look into the matter."

"What did he do?" questioned Nick.

"He vaulted the fence and entered the back door. That is as far as he went. It's as far as most men would have gone. When he saw the corpse on the kitchen floor —well, he dropped the hat and bolted."

"Bolted where?"

"Luckily, Mr. Carter, he ran nearly into the arms of Policeman Brady, who is on this beat in the morning," said Kennedy. "He told him what he had seen, and Brady returned with him to the house. He saw at a glance that a double murder had been committed, and he then notified the precinct station."

"That was about an hour ago."

"Yes. I was sent here with other officers, but was told to let things alone until you arrived, as headquarters had requested you to take on the case. That's all there is to it."

"You mean, Kennedy, that that's the beginning of it," said Nick. "To learn what there really is to it may tax the discernment of the best of us."

"That's true, Mr. Carter, after all," Kennedy readily allowed.

"Have you inquired at the neighboring houses?"

"Yes, sir. Only a woman living opposite can supply any information."

"What is that?"

"She saw two men and a woman, presumably Gibson and the couple mentioned, entering the house day before yesterday," Kennedy proceeded to report. "Something like an hour after dark yesterday, or about seven o'clock in the evening, the same woman was seated at her front window waiting for her husband to come home to supper. She saw two men entering this house, and a moment later she saw the reflection of a light in the dining room."

"In any other rooms?"

"No, sir. Nor could she tell me anything more, for her husband came in just then and she went to supper with him."

Nick glanced toward the street.

"There is an arc light on the corner," he observed. "I suppose, since it was evening, that the electric light enabled her to see the two men."

"Yes, sir. I asked her about that."

"Did you ask her for a description of them?"

"I did, sir," Kennedy nodded. "She said that one appeared to be a man of middle age and was very well dressed. She also noticed that he wore a full beard."

"Possibly a disguise."

"The other looked a bit rough, she said, and wore a gray slouch hat, the same that the milkman found in the next yard this morning," said Kennedy. "I sent an officer over to show it to her, and she readily identified it."

"Anything more?" queried Nick.

"She told me he carried a suit case, also, and she judged that he had come from a distance. She noticed that the suit case appeared to be old and battered and that one of the straps was dangling, corresponding with the general

appearance of the man himself. That was all she could tell me."

"Was any disturbance heard last evening by people in the neighboring houses?" Nick asked.

"No, sir," said Kennedy. "I have inquired at every house."

"Did the woman living opposite see from which direction the two men came?"

"She did. They came around the corner and entered the front door of this house."

"I see that you have unlocked it," Nick remarked, observing that the door then was ajar. "Have you identified either of the two victims?"

"No, sir. I have not tried, Mr. Carter, as a matter of fact, knowing that you were on your way here. By their looks——"

"I will size up their looks for myself, Kennedy," Nick interposed. "Are things about as you found them?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did Brady disturb anything?"

"No, sir. He has been on the force long enough to know where he is at."

"Very good." Nick turned and opened the door. "I'll have a look at the scene. Come with me, Chick."

Chick Carter accompanied him into the house, followed a moment later by Sergeant Kennedy and the physician.

CHAPTER II.

A PERPLEXING PROBLEM.

Nick Carter had only to enter the hall of the house to see the first signs of the sanguinary conflict of the previous night.

On the wall opposite the dining-room door were spots and streaks of blood, great, irregular streaks and smooches, as if drops and splotches that had spurted upon the wall paper had been rubbed and spread by the garments of persons engaged in a terrific struggle. A rug near by had been kicked into a shapeless heap near the baseboard.

Nick merely glanced at these, then paused at the open door of the dining room, in which the scene was doubly shocking.

The roller shades of both windows had been raised, admitting the morning sunlight.

One lamp of an electric chandelier still was burning. It looked wan and yellow in contrast with the bright light from outside.

"Great guns!" Chick Carter muttered, then at Nick's elbow. "What a scene of disorder."

"It's the limit," Nick tersely agreed.

"Slaughter pen is right," added Chick, recalling the remark of the physician.

The scene was, indeed, a shocking one. The table was out of place. Broken glasses from the sideboard strewed the floor. Chairs were overturned and broken. Spots and splashes of blood were everywhere. It stood in a great, partly dry and congealed pool on the floor between the table and the hall door—a pool in which the corpse of a murdered man was lying.

He had fallen upon his back and was lying with face upturned in the sunlight shed through one of the windows. There was a great bruise under one eye and a gash in his cheek.

He had been stabbed twice in the breast, and from the second wound still protruded the weapon used by his assailant, a knife driven home to the victim's heart with all the merciless energy of bitter vengefulness, or utter desperation.

He was a man in middle life and of powerful build, a smooth-shaven man of dark complexion, close-cut hair, and a hard, somewhat sinister cast of features.

"Do you know him?" asked Nick, after viewing the scene for several moments.

"No," said Chick. "Do you?"

Nick stepped into the room and bent above the corpse. With the tip of his finger he lifted the dead man's upper lip, revealing a quantity of gold bridgework on three of the teeth. He turned the left hand, also, and found that part of the third finger had been amputated.

"I thought I recognized him," he remarked, rising and glancing again at the battered face. "We have his photograph in our album."

"Who is he?" Chick questioned.

"Cornelius Taggart," said Nick. "Better known to the police as Connie Taggart."

"By Jove, you're right," Chick declared, gazing. "I recognize him, now. Connie Taggart, the yegg and cracksman."

"He's the man," Nick nodded. "He has cracked his last crib and paid the price. He has been about as bad an egg, Chick, as one often finds in a basket. Have you examined this body, Doctor Boyden?"

Sergeant Kennedy and the physician had approached as far as the open door.

"Only superficially," was the physician's reply.

"How long would you say he has been dead?"

"Fully twelve hours, Mr. Carter; probably longer."

"The crime must have been committed last evening, then."

"Undoubtedly."

"You raised these roller shades, Kennedy, I infer," said Nick, glancing at the sergeant.

"I did, sir."

"You found the electric lamp burning, of course."

"Yes, sir. I thought I had better leave it until you arrived. Aside from the two curtains, Mr. Carter, the room is as Brady found it when he entered."

"Very good."

"There is the hat found in the next yard by the milkman," Kennedy added, pointing.

Nick took it from a chair on which it had been tossed and began to examine it.

It was of gray felt, much worn and defaced with grease and dirt. A twisted cord encircled it, with two small silk tassels, or the frayed remnants of them. There were two round holes through the crown, on opposite sides of it.

Nick noted the size and examined the greasy interior. He found several short black hairs sticking to the sweat leather. The hat bore no trade-mark, however, nor any name or initial pointing to the identity of the owner.

Nevertheless, after a brief inspection, Nick said confidently:

"The owner of this hat is a Mexican. It is like those worn by some of the Mexican troopers. He has done military service, too, as appears in these two holes through the crown. They are bullet holes."

"Could they have been made last night?" asked Chick.

"No. The edge of the felt around them is much soiled,

which would be comparatively clean if they were so recently made."

"I see."

"A bullet passed through the man't hat in a battle, or some sort of a skirmish," Nick added. "He is a man of middle size, I judge, with dark complexion and black hair."

"That answers the description the woman living opposite gave me," put in Kennedy. "She saw him quite plainly when the two men came around the corner and entered the house."

"She stated that his companion wore a beard, I think you said."

"She did, Mr. Carter and that he was well dressed."

"It could not have been this man, then, unless he was in disguise," said Nick, glancing at Taggart's beardless face. "The disguise should be here, in that case, even though he removed it."

"I have not seen it," said Kennedy.

"Nor the suit case brought in by his companion?"

"No, sir. That is not to be found. I have looked through the house."

"There must have been several men here, Nick, judging from the fight that came off," Chick remarked.

"Yes, undoubtedly," Nick agreed. "I am seeking evidence that might explain the fight."

"It must have occurred quite soon after the two men entered."

"True."

"Others must have been here when they came in, then, or——"

"One moment," Nick interposed. "I'll see what more I can find."

He crouched again above Taggart's body and searched his pockets. Aside from a fully loaded revolver, he found only a few articles of no special significance, nor any letter or writing whatever, that might otherwise have shed a ray of light on the mystery.

Nick then removed the weapon from the wound and examined it. It was a double-edged sheath knife with a blade about six inches long, and with an elkhorn handle. It bore no mark of any kind, though it evidently had seen considerable service.

"This undoubtedly belongs to the Mexican," said Nick, placing it on the table after inspecting it. "Not one man in ten thousand in these parts carries such a knife. They're common in Mexico, however, which further confirms my theory as to the man's nationality."

"I think you're right," said Chick. "It looks very much, too, as if he killed this crook in self-defense."

"That is my opinion, Chick, at present," Nick replied, turning toward the hall. "We will look farther."

"This way to the kitchen," said Kennedy. "The other body is there. You can go that way, if you prefer."

The sergeant pointed to a closed door between the dining room and the kitchen, and Nick then turned in that direction.

"Did you find this door closed, Kennedy, or open?" he inquired.

"Closed, sir, just as you see it," said Kennedy. "But I know it leads into the kitchen."

"I judged so."

"The fight evidently continued from here to the kitchen, but it was through the hall, not that way," Kennedy added, as Nick opened the door.

The scene in the kitchen was equally tragic, though the room was in less disorder than the other.

A door leading into the rear yard was wide open.

Nearly on the threshold, so near that one foot touched it, though his head was toward the middle of the room, lay another victim of the fray of the previous night.

He then was lying on his back, though the body evidently had been turned over since the fatality, for the pool of blood in which it had lain was at one side.

The body was that of a man in the twenties, a well-built man in a dark plaid suit. A woolen cap had fallen from his head. His right arm was extended, the hand still holding with rigid death grip a loaded revolver.

He had been shot through the heart.

Both detectives immediately recognized this man, and Chick said quickly:

"By Jove, it's Batty Lang, Nick, the gangster. He finally has got what was coming to him."

Nick bowed without speaking, with his gaze still fixed intently upon the man on the floor. He was noting his position, the direction in which he had fallen, the weapon in his extended hand, and the outlook through the open back door.

Doctor Boyden broke the brief silence.

"You appear to know this man, also, Mr. Carter," he said gravely.

"Yes, I know him," Nick now replied. "His name is Bartholomew Lang. He is an East Side product, and at times has been identified with the notorious Ben Badger gang. He is more commonly called Batty Lang."

"Good heavens!" Doctor Boyden exclaimed. "It appears, then, that the house was filled with crooks and desperadoes last evening."

"And all here to nail that Mexican, Mr. Carter, if your theory as to his nationality is correct," added Kennedy. "He must have put up an awful fight, if he got the best of them single-handed."

"I thoroughly agree with you, Kennedy—if that is what he did," Nick said, a bit dryly.

"Well, he evidently stabbed Taggart and shot this fellow, Batty Lang, as you call him," Kennedy confidently vouchsafed. "He must have got away with the suit case, too, though he lost his hat in his fight. How else can you size it up?"

Nick Carter did not inform him. Instead, without replying, he began a closer inspection of Lang's body, carefully searching his several pockets, in none of which he found anything that appeared to bear in any way upon what had transpired the previous night, or what had led up to it.

Nick noted the probable direction from which the fatal bullet had been fired, however, and also that every chamber of the revolver in the gangster's rigid hand still contained a cartridge.

"Wait here, Kennedy, both you and Doctor Boyden," he said rising after making these investigations. "I shall return in a few minutes. Come with me, Chick."

Nick led the way from the back door with the last, Chick following him. He then began an inspection of the ground in the rear yard, tracing numerous footprints to the back fence, over which he vaulted.

There the trail appeared to divide, tracks in the greensward showing that one or more persons had fled to the left and through the grounds of an adjoining estate, while others had gone directly through the yard in the

direction of the side street. The distance between the tracks, which were too faint to be of additional value, showed that all of these persons were running.

"Follow those leading to the side street, Chick, and see what more you can learn," Nick directed, after calling Chick's attention to them. "I'll trace the others and rejoin you out there in a few minutes."

Nick traced his part of the trail through the adjoining grounds, as far as a gravel walk leading to the street on which the residence fronted. There he lost it, though the fleeing men evidently had hurried to the street, where no further traces of them could be found.

Nick then walked around the corner and rejoined Chick in the side street.

"Nothing doing, Nick, except these tracks of an automobile which evidently stood here for some little time last evening," said Chick, pointing to the ground near the curbing. "These drippings of oil show that it remained here for some time. It would have been out of view by the woman living opposite the vacant dwelling, and it may be that the Mexican and his companion came here in it."

"Very possible," said Nick. "The tire marks indicate that it was a touring car. It's about ten to one that the gang which fled this way departed in it."

"You speak as if you thought that there was more than one gang," said Chick, with a look of surprise.

"That is precisely what I think."

"For what reason?"

"Several," said Nick. "Circumstances indicate, to begin with, that the house was obtained from the broker, Gibson, only in order to turn a knavish trick on some one. Naturally, if that is true, we must infer that the Mexican was to be the victim of the job."

"Surely, since he was brought there and evidently had come from a distance, possibly all the way from Mexico," said Chick.

"The evidence in the house shows plainly, however, that four or five men were there, possibly more," Nick continued. "A less number could not have put up such a fight, nor have caused so much destruction, in the brief time in which it must have occurred."

"I agree with you."

"It is obvious, too, that the Mexican could not have licked half a dozen men single-handed, surely not such desperate men as Connie Taggart and Batty Lang."

"Certainly not," replied Chick decidedly. "They would have downed him right off the reel."

"He must have had help, then," Nick reasoned. "That is why I think there were two factions in the fight. I mean, of course, two different gangs."

"Both out to get the Mexican?" questioned Chick.

"I'm not sure about that, though it now appears so," Nick replied. "What they were going to gain by getting him is also an open question."

"Decidedly."

"Be that as it may, Chick, he evidently stabbed Taggart and undertook to escape in great haste. Otherwise he would not have left his knife in the yegg's breast."

"Surely not."

"The stabbing may have precipitated the fight, or have occurred after the fight began," Nick proceeded. "There is no way by which that can be immediately determined. It continued through the hall and into the kitchen, where Batty Lang was shot. Here, now, is an important point. It further indicates that there were two gangs in the house."

"What point is that?" Chick inquired.

"You saw where Lang was lying, with his feet near the open door and his head toward the middle of the room. He pitched forward on his face when shot, as the blood on the floor plainly shows."

"True. That was very evident."

"The bullet entered his breast, and came from the direction of the hall door," Nick went on. "Obviously, then, he was facing the hall, with his back to the rear door of the house. That position, together with the fact that he had a revolver in his hand, convinces me that he was attempting to prevent others, presumably including the person who shot him, from following others who had fled through the back door, probably including the Mexican."

"By Jove, that does appear logical," said Chick. "That may explain how the Mexican got away with his suit case."

"I think I am right, Chick, despite that the case opens up a wide field for conjectures," Nick replied. "I did not inform Kennedy and the physician, however, for we may find it of advantage to keep his theory to ourselves."

"Quite likely," Chick agreed.

"The matter must be sifted to the bottom."

"I'm with you."

"We will return to the house, now, and wait until Gibson arrives," said Nick. "He can supply us with a clew, perhaps, to the persons who pretended they wanted to rent the house. He can give us a description of them, at least."

"Most likely," said Chick, as they moved on. "It may be, Nick, that Taggart and Lang were confederates in a job to get the Mexican, or——"

"I don't think they were confederates," Nick interposed.

"Why not?"

"Because I feel sure that Taggart was killed by the Mexican, and his escape and the evidence that Lang was preventing others from pursuing him, indicate that Lang was not a confederate of Taggart, but was opposed to him. No other deduction would be consistent with all of the circumstances."

"That's right, too," Chick quickly nodded. "I see the point."

"Lang has been identified at times with the Ben Badger gang," Nick added. "Badger is a tough ticket, also that notorious sister of his, Sadie Badger. They're the kingpins of about as bad a bunch as can be found in the East Side."

"Right again, Nick."

"I never have heard, however, that Connie Taggart was friendly with them. If any of them were with Lang last night, we may be able to find positive evidence of it and to force a squeal from them. Otherwise—hello!"

Nick broke off abruptly when they turned the corner, and Chick also saw the occasion for it.

"Goodness!" he exclaimed. "There is Patsy, and—yes, by Jove, it's Frank Mantell. What the deuce has sent them here?"

The touring car containing Patsy Garvan and Mantell,

driven by the latter's chauffeur, had just swerved to the sidewalk near the house in which the two murders had been committed.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN FROM MEXICO.

Nick Carter hastened to join Patsy and Frank Mantell, pausing at the latter's touring car to learn the occasion for his visit. He had not long to wait, for Mantell hardly took time to greet him.

"You must throw up this murder case, Nick; you really must, and take on a matter in which I am desperately interested," he forcibly insisted. "More than half a million dollars are at stake. They're hopelessly lost, in fact, unless you can trace and recover them. You must drop this case and——"

"Wait!" Nick interposed, after intently regarding him. "Keep your head. Who has lost so much money, and when?"

"It's not money," Mantell replied, in hurried undertones. "It's a collection of old jewels of vast value, which was obtained under most extraordinary circumstances. I cannot inform you in detail out here, Nick, where I might be overheard by others. Come with me to my residence, where——"

"Presently, perhaps," Nick again interrupted. "Come into this house, instead, where we can occupy one of the chambers. I then will hear what you have to say."

Mantell did not wait for the invitation to be repeated. He sprang out of the car before it was fairly uttered, then accompanied the detective to the house, followed by Chick and Patsy.

Nick lingered only to inform Sergeant Kennedy that he had other business for a few minutes, directing him to take charge of the house while he was engaged, and he then led his three companions to a front chamber and closed the door.

"Now, Mantell, out with it as briefly as possible," said he, when they were seated. "What is this matter in which you are so desperately interested?"

He had read in Mantell's pale face the depths of his anxiety and distress, and knowing him to have a level head and excellent judgment and discretion, he reasoned that it must be a matter of extraordinary importance.

Mantell hastened to obey him.

"It began, Nick, with a letter I received about ten days ago from an old college chum of mine, Calvin Vandyke, a man able in every way to judge of what he wrote me," he said earnestly. "Unfortunately, however, I haven't the letter in my pocket. It is in the desk in my library."

"Well, well, what is it about?" Nick inquired. "Where is Mr. Vandyke?"

"He now is in Mexico City, under so important a contract that he cannot possibly leave the country for several months."

"Mexico City, eh?"

Nick shot a swift, furtive glance at Chick, so significant that the latter suppressed a look of surprise and remained silent.

"Yes," Mantell quickly nodded. "The letter he wrote me explained all that, Nick, and why he made me his partner in this matter, giving me an equal interest with him and the third party involved."

"Who is the third party?"

"A Mexican named Juan Padillo, recently a soldier in Villa's forces during the campaign in northern Mexico. He has deserted, and now is in this city. That is to say—if he still is in the land of the living. I'm far from sure of it."

"Explain," said Nick. "Why did Juan Padillo become a deserter?"

"Because of a find he made during the sacking of an old monastery in Chihuahua territory, after the subjection of that section in which it is located and the flight of most of the inhabitants. Vandyke has quietly looked up the legal side of the matter, and he finds that the retention of these spoils of war is entirely legitimate. In other words, Juan Padillo has a right to retain his prize and dispose of it to the best advantage."

"Admitting that, Mantell, what are the other circumstances?" Nick inquired.

"They may be briefly stated. Padillo made this find in a secret vault, which he discovered entirely by chance, under a wine cellar in the monastery. He was the only person in Mexico who knew of his discovery and that he got away with his plunder, with the single exception of Calvin Vandyke, with whom Padillo long has had friendly relations, and to whom he turned for aid and advice."

"Of what do these spoils of war, as you call them, consist?" Nick questioned.

"I can give you only an idea, Nick, without referring to Vandyke's letter, which describes the articles in detail and estimates their value," said Mantell. "They consist of clerical robes and jewels of great antiquity, which, Vandyke has learned, must have been brought from Spain as far back as the sixteenth century, and which probably have since been kept in concealment in the monastery vault."

"Give me an idea of them."

"Well, one article is an archbishop's robe of purple, wrought with a design in diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and pearls. The gems are mounted in gold, covering the entire breast of the robe, with a design consisting of the ancient Spanish coat of arms, the double eagles back to back, with wings raised and beaks open."

"I recall it," Nick nodded.

"There are two gold crowns, also, lavishly mounted with diamonds, emeralds, and sapphires, the most of which are of unusual size and corresponding value. In addition to these are other clerical robes of purple and white silk, all worked with gems the worth of which could only be roughly estimated. Vandyke places the value of the entire prize, however, at about six hundred thousand dollars."

"Gee, whiz!" Patsy quietly exclaimed. "That sure was some find."

"Juan Padillo was much dazzled by it, of course, and scarce knew what to do," Mantell earnestly continued. "He did not dare to confide in any of his countrymen. He determined to take advantage of the prize, however, and to get out of the country with it."

"How long ago was that?" Nick inquired.

"Nearly two months. He obtained an old leather suit case, in which he packed the spoils, and with which he succeeded in reaching Mexico City, where he at once sought Vandyke and confided in him, offering to share equally with him in return for his advice and assistance."

"I see."

"Vandyke looked into the matter, keeping Padillo concealed in his residence," Mantell went on. "He then realized the vast value of the prize, but being utterly unable to leave the country himself, he proposed including me in the matter on an equal footing, telling Padillo that he could come to me and that I would dispose of the gems at their market value. Padillo eagerly accepted the proposal, knowing that he would be shot as a deserter, if caught, and that he must lose no time in getting out of the country."

"I follow you," Nick put in.

"Vandyke then smuggled him to Vera Cruz, and finally got him on board a schooner about to leave for New York, paying his passage and giving him careful instructions."

"Namely?"

"He directed him not to leave the vessel after his arrival here until I called for him, also not to open the suit case until he was safe in my residence, and to pretend all the while that he was a penniless Mexican on his way to join relatives in this city."

"All were wise precautions," Nick remarked.

"Vandyke then sent me a letter, stating all of these facts and invited me to cooperate with him," Mantell continued. "Naturally, with two hundred thousand dollars in view, I was more than glad to comply. I wrote Vandyke to that effect, and since have been constantly on the watch for the arrival of the vessel. She was docked at Gray's wharf late yesterday afternoon. But I did not learn of it until I read the shipping news this morning. I then rushed down to the wharf with my touring car, only to learn that——"

"That Juan Padillo left the vessel soon after her arrival yesterday and in company with a man who used your name," said Nick, interrupting.

"Good heavens!" Mantell exclaimed, with a gasp. "How did you know that?"

"Your anxiety, coupled with the fact that Padillo was to remain on the vessel until you called for him, admits of no other deductions," Nick replied evasively.

"You are right, Carter, perfectly right," Mantell said, with a groan. "Padillo left the vessel about six o'clock last evening, taking with him the suit case containing his plunder."

"With a man who used your name?"

"Yes."

"Who informed you?"

"The captain of the vessel."

"What more could he tell you?"

"Only that Padillo had, as I then could judge, carefully followed the directions Vandyke had given him. Captain Macy evidently knew nothing about the contents of the suit case, and he said it was the only piece of luggage the Mexican had, and that he had taken it ashore. He could give me only a vague description of the man who called for him, and said that Padillo appeared relieved and eager to accompany him. They left from the head of the wharf in a touring car, and——"

"And that's all you know about them," Nick again interrupted.

"I admit that, Carter, and that's why I want your aid," Mantell said earnestly. "This man and the suit case must be found. I never can look Vandyke in the face. Think of it! If——"

"That's what I am doing," said Nick, smiling a bit oddly. "Now, Mantell, answer my questions. I then may do something more than think. Whom have you told about this matter?"

"Only three persons," Mantell quickly asserted. "My wife and my parents, with whom Helen and I have been living since our marriage. You knew, of course, that I was married eight weeks ago to Helen Bailey, the pretty telephone girl whom you served so kindly—and who, I may add, thinks so well of you Cartere."

"Yes, indeed, I know all about that, Mantell, but it's irrelevant just now," smiled Nick. "Did you caution your parents, however, to say nothing about the matter?"

"I did so most impressively."

"Do you think they have obeyed you?"

"Yes, positively."

"Where did you talk with them about it?"

"At home, Nick, in the library."

"You must have been overheard."

"I don't think so."

"I know so," Nick insisted. "Either that, Mantell, or the letter sent you by Vandyke has been read by one of your servants, or by some outsider. In no other way, if your wife and parents have been silent on the subject, could the man who lured Juan Padillo from the vessel and used your name have learned anything about the matter."

"I confess that I am mystified, Carter, as well as filled with dismay," Mantell hopelessly admitted. "You are the only one to whom I can turn. What can be done? How can——"

"Stop a moment," Nick interposed, rising abruptly. "There is nothing in further discussing the case. Return to your car, Mantell, and wait until I rejoin you. Go with him, Patsy."

"Which may mean that you will——"

"Look into the matter?" Nick cut in again. "Yes, I will do what I can for you. Time is of value, moreover, so don't delay to thank me. Go at once."

Patsy led the way, Mantell following, with an expression of great relief on his refined, attractive face.

"Well, by Jove, that sheds limelight on this murder mystery," said Chick, lingering briefly with Nick in the chamber. "This certainly is a remarkable coincidence."

"I suspected something of the kind, Chick, when he mentioned the loss of a vast quantity of jewels," Nick replied. "That was one reason why I consented to hear his story."

"You have no doubt, of course, that the Mexican who was here last evening was Juan Padillo."

"Not the slightest."

"Lured here by crooks who had learned of the circumstances and been watching for the vessel."

"Exactly. They were more alert than Mantell, and got in their work ahead of him."

"But how do you size up what occurred here?"

"I'm not quite ready to say," said Nick. "I am going with Mantell to his residence. You remain here and get what information Gibson can impart. Have a look in the meantime at the doors and windows of the house. There may be evidence indicating that it was broken into by some of the rascals afterward engaged in the fight."

"I'll find it, Nick, if there is any," Chick confidently predicted. "I see at what you are driving."

"Have Kennedy summon the coroner, also, and direct him to take the customary legal steps here," Nick added. "Say nothing about what we have learned and suspect,

but tell him we will continue our investigations, and report later."

"I've got you."

"Having taken those steps, rejoin me at Mantell's residence as quickly as possible," Nick directed. "He lives ——"

"I know the house. It's the mansion built by Mantell, the senior, in Riverside Drive," Chick put in. "I will lose no time in following you."

"I will go with Mantell, in his car, leaving Danny to bring you in ours," said Nick, as both turned from the chamber. "There must be quick work done on this case, or, unless I am much mistaken, both Juan Padillo and his war prize of ancient jewels will go by the board."

"Quick work, then, is the proper caper," Chick declared. "I'll see you a little later."

Nick did not reply, but hastened out to the car in which Patsy and Frank Mantell were waiting.

"To your residence," he directed, addressing the latter. "Let her go at top speed, chauffeur. Minutes count."

CHAPTER IV.

A STARTLING DISCOVERY.

It was nearly noon when the touring car containing Nick Carter and his companions sped up the broad driveway and stopped under the porte-cochère of the magnificent Mantell mansion overlooking the Hudson.

"We shall not find my father at home, Nick," Mantell remarked, while alighting from the car. "He still is engaged in settling up the affairs of our defunct department store, wrecked by the knavery of his junior partner, that treacherous miscreant, Gaston Goulard. No need to tell you of that rascal, Nick, whom you so quickly pulled up to the ringbolt after taking on the case."

"No need, indeed," Nick replied, a bit grimly. "It was decidedly unfortunate, though, that he slipped through the meshes of the legal net and eluded the punishment he deserved."

"Decidedly so."

"His being a partner in the business was all that saved him," Nick added. "It enabled a clever criminal lawyer to pull him out of the fire, on grounds that either of the partners had a legal right to dispose at will of the property of the firm. It was a hard fight, and the rascal got away without punishment, barring the penalty he had brought upon himself, that of financial ruin and hopeless dishonor."

"Right in both respects," Mantell nodded. "Gaston Goulard is down and out forever."

"By the way, Mantell, do you ever see him?" Nick inquired.

"Yes, occasionally," was the reply. "I never see him, however, that he does not threaten to get even with me for the past."

"Humph!" Nick ejaculated contemptuously.

"Get even, indeed!" Mantell bitterly added. "The boot should be on the other leg. He hates me for having won and married Helen Bailey, Nick, to whose hand he had aspirations even while engaged in his treacherous roberies. I saw him about ten days ago, looking seedy enough, Nick, and as if dissipation was making inroads upon his health."

"Threatened you, Mantell, has he?" questioned Nick, with brows knitting slightly.

"Repeatedly," Mantell nodded, as they mounted the steps. "I somehow fear the rascal, Nick, for he is capable of any degree of knavery, and is a desperate dog when crossed. I expect trouble from him, in fact, and for that reason am constantly alert."

"I predicted after his exposure and arrest that he would go to the bad," said Nick. "Ah, this is a pleasure, indeed, Mrs. Mantell."

Having entered the handsomely furnished house while speaking, where they were met in the hall by Mantell's charming young wife, the beautiful girl whom Nick first had seen at a telephone switchboard, under circumstances that revealed her lofty and heroic character, as well as which enabled him to be of great service to her.

She hastened to shake hands with both him and Patsy, saying feelingly:

"Your pleasure could not be greater than mine, Mr. Carter. I am delighted to see you. I ought to scold you roundly, however, for not having called here occasionally, at least."

"That's right, too, Helen," put in Mantell.

"You overlook one fact," smiled Nick, replying to her. "What is that, Mr. Carter?"

"That I have hardly an hour in the week, not to say in a day, that I can really call my own," Nick said gravely. "I am a very busy man, you know."

"Ah, I suppose so," Helen rejoined. "And chiefly because other men are so wicked."

"True."

"It is deplorable."

"True again," said Nick. "Nor am I less busy than usual this morning. I think, Frank, we had better get right at this matter."

"I think so, too."

"I'm sure your wife will excuse us."

She bowed and smiled agreeably, and Nick and Patsy followed Mantell into the library, a superbly furnished room overlooking the side grounds.

"Now, Nick, what can I tell you?" he asked, placing chairs for them. "Why have you come here?"

"To begin with, Mantell, I want to see the letter written to you by Calvin Vandyke," said Nick. "Where have you kept it?"

"Here, in my desk," said Mantell, rising to unlock a large roll-top desk in one corner of the spacious room.

"Is your desk usually locked?"

"Always, Nick, when I am absent."

"Wait one moment," said the detective. "Let me examine the lock."

Mantell complied, handing him the key.

Nick unlocked the desk, and, rolling the top partly up, he began a careful inspection of the brass socket which received the bolt of the lock when the desk was securely closed. He found several tiny, faint scratches on one side of it, which could not have been caused by the action of the bolt, not being where it came in contact with the socket. An examination with a powerful lens, moreover, showed that these slight marks were quite bright, as if recently made and with an instrument as sharp as the point of a pin.

Nick returned the ring of keys and resumed his seat.

"That lock has recently been picked, Mantell," he said confidently.

"Picked!" Mantell exclaimed amazedly. "Are you sure of it?"

"Positively."

"But——"

"There aren't any buts," Nick interrupted. "I know when evidence shows that a lock has been picked. The crook who picked that one used a tool with a sharp point, which at times touched one side of the bolt socket and left faint marks in the brass. The brightness of them shows that it was quite recently done."

"But our servants are entirely trustworthy, Nick, and——"

"I don't think it was done by one of your servants," Nick again interrupted. "Have you a burglar alarm in the house?"

"Yes, an electric alarm," said Mantell. "All of the doors and windows on the ground floor are protected. Perkins, the butler, sets it each night before he retires."

"This job may have been done during the day."

"But there is always some one in the house."

"I will look farther presently," said Nick, not inclined to argue the point. "Let me see the Vandyke letter, also the envelope, if you have it."

Mantell took them from a pigeonhole in the desk and placed them in the detective's hand.

Nick turned to the window and began to inspect them with his lens, which he had not replaced in his pocket. He did not read the letter, which covered several closely written sheets, and in which he apparently had no interest aside from the paper on which it was written.

"A man handling a tool small enough to pick the lock of a desk is very likely to soil the balls of his thumb and fingers with the metal," he remarked, after several moments. "There are faint marks and smooches both on this envelope and the backs of several sheets of the paper."

"I did not observe them," said Mantell, noting the detective's subtle intonation. "What do you make of them, Carter?"

"They look very much like finger prints," said Nick. "Patsy——"

"Yes, chief."

Patsy had foreseen what was coming and was alert on the instant.

"Mantell's car is waiting outside," said Nick, folding the letter and replacing it in the envelope. "His chauffeur will take you to our office and bring you back here. Examine these smooches with a magnifying glass and see what you make of them. If finger prints, compare them with our collection. Report as quickly as possible."

"Trust me for that, chief," cried Patsy, hastening from the room.

"While we are waiting, Mantell, I will have a look around the outside of the house," said Nick, rising. "I may find evidence that it has been recently entered, in spite of your burglar alarm. You had better wait here. I can work more quickly alone."

Nick walked out through the hall after the last remark, and ten minutes had passed when he returned.

"Well?" questioned Mantell anxiously. "What have you found?"

"Nothing positively showing that the house was entered by night," Nick replied, resuming his seat. "It may have been accomplished through a second-story window, however, several of which can be quite easily reached. I found, nevertheless, positive evidence of something else."

"Of what?"

"That two men quite recently were playing the eavesdropper under your library windows," said Nick. "There are partly obliterated footprints in the greensward and the flower beds flanking the foundation wall below the windows."

"By Jove, is it possible!"

"If they were under only one window, I would feel less confident," Nick added. "The fact that traces of the same impressions appear under all of the windows convinces me that I am right. They were spying outside ten evenings ago."

"How do you fix the exact day?" Mantell questioned perplexedly.

"By the character of the imprints and the condition of the near greensward, to which they frequently stepped," Nick explained. "We had a hard rain eleven days ago, and have had none since then."

"I remember."

"A hard rain would completely obliterate such imprints from the soil of a flower bed," Nick went on. "These, then, must have been formed since the storm. The depth and irregular character of them, however, show that the soil must have been very soft and muddy, as if very soon after the rain. This appears, too, in that when they stepped to the greensward they left many traces of the soil clinging to their soles. I feel perfectly safe in saying that they were there the night after the storm."

Mantell's face had taken on a more serious expression.

"By Jove, you have reminded me of something, Carter," he said gravely.

"What is that?"

"It was on the day following that storm that I received Vandyke's letter, and I read it aloud that evening to my wife and parents. We were here in the library. I begin to think your deductions are correct."

"I am very sure of it," Nick declared, smiling a bit oddly.

"But who could have been spying upon us, or playing the eavesdropper?"

"There were two men, Mantell, judging from the different imprints, or what little is left of them," said Nick. "They may have been here with some other object in view, possibly the planning of a burglary. Their hearing that letter, however, may have been only incidental, though it evidently resulted in a change of their plans for an entirely different job."

"You mean that of getting and robbing Juan Padillo."

"Precisely."

"But why do you suspect that a burglary was contemplated?"

"Because a notorious burglar, one of the most dangerous yeggs in the country, was killed last night in a house in Manhattanville," Nick now explained. "I refer to Cornelius Taggart, quite commonly known as Connie Taggart, the cracksman."

"Good heavens!" Mantell's color had been steadily waning. "You imply, Carter, that he may have been one of the eavesdroppers, that he may have been the scoundrel who used my name to deceive Juan Padillo."

"Either he, Mantell, or his confederate," bowed Nick. "That is precisely what I think."

"But why? For any other reason?" Mantell asked anxiously.

"Yes, a very potent reason," nodded the detective. "Listen, Mantell, and I will tell why I think so."

Nick then informed him of what had been discovered in the Manhattanville house, the evidence he had found, and many of the conclusions at which he had arrived.

Mantell listened without interrupting, but with steadily increasing apprehensions, as appeared in the look of despair that finally settled on his drawn, white face.

"There is nothing to it, Carter," he said, with a groan, when Nick had concluded. "They have got both the man and the jewels. They have killed Padillo, and the jewels are gone forever."

"Don't be so sure of that," said Nick. "I may find a way to save the man and recover the gems. That's what I am seeking—the way."

"You mean——"

"I mean that I want to discover, if possible, the identity of Taggart's confederate," Nick interrupted. "I then can shape up my work. That is why I came here to see Vandyke's letter. I suspect that a copy of it was made. I suspected, also, if it was obtained by breaking into the house and forcing your desk, that it might bear finger prints of the crooks. Patsy will report a little later."

"But why wouldn't a crook have taken the letter itself?" questioned Mantell. "Why would he have made a copy of it?"

"Because you would have missed the letter, and, of course, would have become suspicious," Nick pointed out "You would immediately have taken steps to thwart the knavery that has been successfully accomplished through leaving the letter in its customary place."

"Yes, yes, I see," Mantell nodded. "I ought to have thought of that. You suspect then, that——"

"Wait! There comes my touring car with Chick and Danny, my chauffeur," Nick interrupted, glancing from the window. "I must see what more he has learned."

"I will admit him," cried Mantell, hastening to do so.

Chick entered the library with him a few moments later. He at once proceeded to report to Nick that Gibson, the house broker, could add nothing definite to the statements he had made by telephone, and that his description of the couple who had called to rent the house were of but little value, the woman having been veiled at the time, while the man probably was in disguise.

On one of the basement windows, however, Chick had found convincing evidence that the house had been forcibly entered, but he could discover no clew to the identity or number of the burglars.

"Whether they were confederates of Taggart or——"

"They were not," said Nick, interrupting Chick's report. "Taggart was killed by Padillo, and he either was the man who lured the Mexican to the house, or a confederate of the man who did so. In either case, Chick, the Taggart gang would have had access to the house without breaking into it."

"That's logical," Chick quickly admitted. "There is no denying it."

"If we can discover the identity of Taggart's confederate, therefore, we shall have a definite clew to both gangs that evidently were in the house," Nick added. "Ah, Patsy is returning. Admit him, Mantell. His haste indicates that he has made a discovery of some importance."

Nick had caught sight of the returning automobile, from which Patsy was hastening to alight before it came to a stop in the driveway. He entered the library a moment later, and his first words confirmed Nick's prediction.

"They are finger prints, chief, all right," he cried, returning the Vandyke letter.

"Are there corresponding ones in our collection?" Nick inquired.

"That's what, chief."

"Whose are they, Patsy?"

"Those of the crook who gave the law the slip, but not before we got his measurements and identification marks," cried Patsy. "There is no mistaking them, chief. They are the finger prints of—Gaston Goulard!"

CHAPTER V.

A CHANCE CLEW.

No jungle in the heart of the African desert, no wilds of the Far West, no desert region of the ice-bound North, no corner of the whole wide world, in fact, contains beasts more to be dreaded, more crafty, cruel, and terrible, than those to be found within the precincts of a great city, in the haunts of the underworld, in the lairs and labyrinths of vice and crime.

Close upon four o'clock that afternoon, or about three hours after Nick Carter and his assistants left the Mantell residence, two women met by chance in a certain disreputable section of the East Side, and nearly in front of an inferior hotel restaurant and barroom run by one Barney Magrath.

There was no mistaking their type and character. Their flashy attire, their painted cheeks, the swagger atmosphere with which they met and entered into conversation, told the story in broad-faced type and double-leaded lines.

One was a slender, thin-featured woman with red hair, crafty gray eyes, and a sinister expression.

The other was a more striking woman. She had a fine figure, the better clad of the two, a woman in the twenties, with regular features, dark hair and complexion, a firm mouth and chin. Hers was a decidedly strong and quite handsome face, lighted with eyes that had a habitual searching and defiant expression.

The first words that passed between them, uttered by the woman with red hair, fell upon the ears of a man who was about emerging from the near barroom, and who instantly passed back of the swinging doors and lingered to listen.

"Oh, I say!" exclaimed the woman. "You're just the skirt I want to see. I've been looking for you, Sadie."

The brows of the listening man knit slightly. He appeared of a type that frequented that locality, a rather sinister-looking fellow with a black mustache.

No observer would have suspected him of being a detective—to say nothing of being the most noted detective of his day.

"The woman herself—Sadie Badger," was the thought that flashed through his mind. "The other jade is Mollie Damon, a running mate of Slugger Sloan, a holdup man."

Nick had obtained a momentary glimpse of both women when they halted on the sidewalk, and he had instantly recognized both notorious crooks.

"Looking for me, Moll?" Sadie Badger questioned, sharply eying her.

"That's what, Sadie."

"What do you want? Are you on the borrow?"

"Nix! Not much! I've got coin to burn."

"What's up, then?"

"There's a gent who wants to meet you. He wanted me to find you."

"Meet me, eh?" Sadie's eyes took on a sinister squint. "Why does he want to meet me?"

"He'll tell you," Moll Damon returned. "I'm not wise. That is, only wise to—whisper!"

She leaned nearer to her companion and spoke with lowered voice, but her sharp aspirates reached the ears of the listening detective.

"It's about the trick that was turned last night."

Sadie Badger gazed at her without a change of countenance.

"What trick is that?" she demanded. "Come across plainly. I don't get you."

"You don't, eh?" Moll frowned. "Tell that to the marines."

"Tell it to whom you like," Sadie retorted. "It's all one to me."

"Well, whether you get me, Sadie, or not, the gent wants to meet you," Moll insisted. "What do you say?"

Sadie Badger gazed at the curbing for several seconds, evidently sizing up the significance of what she had heard, and the consequences involved in whatever course she might shape.

"Who is the gent, Moll?" she then asked abruptly.

"You don't know him."

"What's his name?"

"Goulard."

"I never heard of him."

"That cuts no ice," Moll declared. "He's all right. You'd better see him. If you'll go with me——"

"I guess not! Not if the court knows itself," Sadie Badger interrupted, with scornful significance. "Safety first, Moll. When I meet strange gents, I meet them where I'm dead sure of having the best of it."

"I'll send him to you, then," Moll Damon quickly suggested.

Sadie hesitated again for a moment, then said curtly:

"You may do that, Moll, if you like."

"Where to?"

"I'm heading for home. You know where I hang out. Send him there and I'll see him."

"I'll do it," Moll quickly nodded. "He'll show up within an hour."

"All right! I'll be there."

The women parted with as little ceremony as they had met.

"Goulard, eh?" thought Nick, having heard every word that passed between the couple. "Goulard, eh? If he shows up before I do, Miss Sadie Badger, he'll go some. This is too good an opportunity to lose."

The conversation between the two women had transpired in a very few minutes. The significance of it, in view of what Nick had learned and suspected, convinced him not only that he was on the right track, but also that the work he had laid out for himself and his two assistants before leaving the Mantell residence, the nature of which will appear, was likely to prove successful.

No one had noticed him in the barroom doorway, and Nick presently slipped out and started in pursuit of Sadie Badger.

"She is not acquainted with Goulard, and probably does not know him by sight," he rightly reasoned from what he had overheard. "If I have sized up the evidence correctly, then, I probably can worm out of her precisely what took place in the Manhattanville house, and possibly learn what became of Padillo and his war prize. I'll wager I have it near enough to pull wool over the woman's eyes and loosen her tongue. I'll take the chance, at all events, regardless of the consequences."

Nick had no difficulty in overtaking Sadie Badger nor in trailing her to her destination.

It proved to be the end dwelling of a long wooden block in the upper East Side. The end house in which she dwelt was within fifty yards of the swirling waters of East River. The intervening space was occupied with a motley aggregation of old buildings devoted to divers uses. They extended even to the walled bank of the restless river, a large sign on the farthest one bearing the single word: "Lime."

"Not a savory section, by Jove," thought Nick, after watching the woman enter the house. "I'll allow reasonable time for Goulard to have been seen and sent here, and then I'll tackle the woman and—well, the proof of a pudding is its eating."

Nick waited less than ten minutes, however, apprehending that Goulard might possibly arrive before he could hoodwink Sadie Badger, and he then approached the house and rang the doorbell.

"I shall hear the rascal ring, of course, if he shows up before I have got in my work," he said to himself while waiting on the steps. "I'll arrest both of them in that case and land them where they belong."

Nick had waited only about a minute when the door was opened by the woman herself, divested of her street garments, and wearing a loose woolen house jacket. She gazed sharply at him, and Nick at once said inquiringly:

"Miss Badger?"

"Yes, I am Miss Badger," said Sadie, nodding a bit coldly.

"I am the man Moll Damon told you about—Gaston Goulard."

"You arrive here very soon after my talk with her," said Sadie suspiciously. "How did she see you so quickly?"

"She did not see me," said Nick, ready with an explanation. "She telephoned."

"Ah! Come in, Mr. Goulard."

Nick entered and followed her into a small rear parlor, divided from that in front by a curtained doorway. Through the broad portière, however, Nick could see that the front room was unoccupied. Listening intently, moreover, he could hear not a sound indicating that other persons were in the house.

Upon taking the chair to which the woman invited him, nevertheless, Nick inquired:

"Do I find you alone here? As you may infer, Miss Badger, my business with you is of a private nature."

The woman sat down at the opposite side of a small center table, near which Nick had seated himself. She did not reply for a moment. Resting both elbows on the table and gazing across it at him, she then said, with seeming indifference:

"Yes, I am alone here. Contrary to what you say, however, I have not the slightest idea, Mr. Goulard, why you want to meet me."

"Why, then, did you consent to see me?" asked Nick pointedly.

"Curiosity," asserted Sadie tersely. "I wondered what you wanted and what you were like."

"You had no other reason?"

"None whatever. You are a total stranger to me, Mr. Goulard."

"Very true," Nick admitted, and he was glad to do so. "Let's become friends, then, instead of total strangers. It will be to your advantage."

"Why to my advantage?" questioned Sadie, with brows drooping.

"Because of what occurred last night."

"Occurred where?"

"In a house in Manhattanville," said Nick. "Don't you know? Didn't Moll Damon give you a hint?"

Sadie scowled impatiently, banging her palms on the top of the table.

"See here, Mr. Goulard, I'm not dealing in hints," she cried, with some asperity. "If you've got anything of importance to say to me, hand it out straight from the shoulder. I'm no riddle guesser. What do you mean?"

Nick saw plainly that the woman was suspicious and inclined to evade him. He was equally sure, on the other hand, that fear alone had impelled her to yield to Moll Damon, which convinced him that she not only knew all about the murders of the previous night, but also was more or less involved in them.

Nick now took her at her word, therefore, and replied, a bit curtly:

"I mean the fight in the house mentioned, a fight in which one of your friends was killed."

"One of my friends? I guess not!" declared Sadie, still with affected ignorance.

"You've got another guess, Miss Badger," Nick said, more forcibly. "You may as well guess right, too, and hand me straight goods. I've not come here to be bluffed, and a bluff won't get you anything. You know what I mean and the man I mean. Batty Lang is his name."

"Batty Lang killed, eh?"

"You know he was killed," insisted Nick, with an affected display of impatience. "I know, too, that he was a friend of yours and of your brother, Ben Badger; also that he was one of the gang of which you two are the big fingers."

"Is that so?" questioned Sadie tentatively, frowning more darkly.

"Yes, that's so," Nick went on, with increasing vehemence. "And that's not all. I know that Lang and some of your gang got wise to a job I was going to pull off in that house, and that some of you got in there to queer it and get the best of me."

"We did, eh?"

"Yes. You did it all right, too, as far as that goes, but you're not going to get fat from it," Nick forcibly informed her. "I've got that finely fixed, you can bet on it, or I wouldn't be here. It's safety first for mine, always."

As may be inferred from all this, Nick was banking on the correctness of his suspicions and deductions, aiming to so impress Sadie Badger that she would enter into a discussion with him and ultimately expose all she knew about the crimes.

Only a detective of Nick Carter's confidence, one having absolute faith in his own discernment and deductions, would have ventured such a subterfuge as this. It seemed likely, nevertheless, to prove as profitable as he had anticipated.

For Sadie Badger now straightened up in her chair and replied, smiling a bit scornfully:

"You seem to be a wise gazabo, Mr. Goulard."

"I know what I'm talking about, all right," Nick informed her.

"You sure are some wise gink," nodded Sadie sarcastically. "If you know all this and have got things as finely fixed as you say, why have you come here to spiel with me about it? You really think that our gang put up a job on you, do you?"

"I don't think," snapped Nick; "I know you did."

"And we're not going to get fat from it, eh?"

"No, you're not—barring you come to terms with me."

"What terms do you mean, Mr. Goulard?"

"I want a fair share of the plunder."

"What plunder is that?" asked Sadie coldly.

"Oh, cut that out," Nick again protested, plainly seeing that he was gradually gaining his point. "You, or some of your gang, have got that Mexican in your clutches, along with the stuff he had in his suit case. Don't hand me any denial. I know all about it. You got him out through the back door of the house, and Batty Lang was shot while trying to prevent me and my friends from following him, after he had stabbed my pal, Connie Taggart. You got away with Padillo and the stuff he brought from Mexico. I know all about it—and I'm going to have a fair share of it."

Sadie Badger's darker frowns showed how deeply she was impressed. She no longer responded angrily, however, but with the earnestness and covert cunning of a woman bent upon learning just what her visitor had up his sleeve. She drew nearer the table, bending over it and saying:

"You do seem to know, Goulard, what you are talking about. Admitting that you do—what do you mean by having things finely fixed?"

"In case anything happens to me while here," Nick informed her, with unmistakable significance.

"Oh, that's what you mean, eh?"

"That's what I mean, all right."

"But suppose you don't get what you're after?" questioned Sadie, narrowly eying him.

"You'll get yours, then, and the rest of your gang," Nick declared. "Take my word for that."

"Explain. I don't quite get you."

"That's done with few words," Nick went on. "You've got this Mexican on your hands. You've got to put him away in order to safely keep that plunder. You can't let him go. He'd have the guns after you within an hour."

"We might compromise with him," said Sadie, further convincing Nick that he was shooting straight at the mark.

"That's not like you, nor any of your gang," Nick returned.

"As well compromise with him, Goulard, as with you," Sadie pointedly asserted.

"Not by a long chalk."

"Why not?"

"Because you know I'll keep my trap closed," said Nick. "You couldn't feel sure of him."

"Yes, we could," said Sadie, with an expressive nod. "He wouldn't dare to squeal. It was he who killed Connie

Taggart, and we know it. You've overlooked that, Goulard, haven't you?"

The woman laughed derisively.

Nick silenced her laugh, however, by retorting pointedly:

"No, nothing of the kind. You've got nothing on Padillo for stabbing Taggart. He did it in self-defense to protect his property. He had a legal right to do that."

"Hang it, that's too true for a joke," frowned Sadie, biting her lips.

"You see," Nick added; "you'll do much better to put the Mexican away and compromise with me."

"Mebbe so, Goulard, after all," admitted the woman reluctantly.

"Besides, there is another reason why you should do so."

"What is that?"

"I am the man who made the job possible," Nick forcibly argued. "If it hadn't been for Taggart and me, your gang would never have laid hands on the stuff."

"That's true, Goulard, I admit," nodded Sadie.

"Do you think, then, now that Taggart's lamp has been put out, that I'm going to be buncoed out of my share of the stuff?" Nick demanded. "Not much! Your gang has got to come across with part of it, or I'll give the dicks a tip that will make trouble for you. I can do it, Sadie, all right. I can do it and make a safe get-away for my part of the job. That's what I'll do, too, unless——"

"Something prevents! Get him, pals! Don't give him a look in!"

Nick turned quickly.

The first face he beheld, of several, was that of—Gaston Goulard.

CHAPTER VI.

THE LAIR OF THE WOLF.

Nick Carter was not caught napping. Not for a moment since entering the house had he ceased to be alert, with eyes watchful and ears bent upon catching the slightest ominous sound.

Nick had reasoned, too, and very naturally, that Gaston Goulard would visit the house in the ordinary way, by ringing the bell and presenting himself at the front door. Not a word to the contrary had passed between Sadie Badger and Moll Damon.

When Nick Carter turned, nevertheless, upon hearing the threatening interruption, he beheld Gaston Goulard and three men rushing into the room with weapons drawn.

Nick recognized all three, moreover—Ben Badger, one Henry Freeland, known as Knocker Freeland, and a Jack Glidden—all members of the notorious Badger gang.

Nick did not ask himself where they came from, nor how he had thus been caught. Nor was it in his nature to yield submissively to such a situation. As quick as a flash, starting up, he reached for his revolver.

He was not more quick than Sadie Badger, however, who realized on the instant that her earlier suspicions were correct, and that there was something wrong.

She lurched forward before Nick was fairly out of his chair, throwing all of her weight and strength against the edge of the table.

She upset it on the instant, forcing it with desperate energy against the back and hips of the detective, just as he was drawing the revolver from his pocket.

The weapon exploded.

A bullet tore a hole in the floor.

Nick lost his footing and pitched backward over the falling table, nearly into the arms of Sadie Badger.

She was ready for him and threw him to one side, and Nick fell to the floor with a crash that shook its timbers.

In another instant, though the entire sensational episode occupied hardly more than that, Goulard and Ben Badger, with their two confederates, were upon the prostrate form of the detective, crushing his arms and legs to the floor and holding him powerless.

"You lie still, blast you, or I'll fix you so there'll be no need of telling you to do so," Goulard cried fiercely, pressing the muzzle of a revolver to Nick's head.

"If he don't, I will," supplemented Badger, with a knife at the detective's throat.

Nick gazed up at their threatening faces and permitted his vainly strained muscles to relax. None yet had recognized him, despite that his false mustache had been partly torn from his lips and was dangling over one ear.

Yielding to the inevitable, therefore, for no mortal man could have overcome such odds and such a disadvantage, Nick said coolly:

"Don't hurry, gentlemen! There'll be time enough to settle this matter in a decent way. I'm not fool enough to oppose such a bunch of blacklegs. Take your time. I'll keep quiet."

Nick had, in fact, more than one reason for doing so.

Goulard snarled an oath, adding quickly:

"By Heaven, this man is Nick Carter!"

"Right," said Nick; "perfectly right, Gaston Goulard."

Sadie Badger stared down at him as if dealt a blow. She seemed unable to realize how completely she had been duped, how completely she had exposed herself and her confederates.

"Get his bracelets," growled Badger, who was the coolest of the gang. "It's the dick, all right. Run your duke under his coat, Knocker, and get his irons. We'll soon fix him so he can wag nothing more dangerous than his tongue."

Freeland hastened to obey, dragging Nick's handcuffs from his pocket, also the revolver he had partly drawn. He thrust the weapon into his own pocket. Then, with the help of the others, he quickly snapped the handcuffs on the detective's wrists.

"Now, Glidden, bring a piece of rope," Badger commanded. "No halfway work for mine. I know this dick from way back. Having got him, I'll make dead sure to keep him."

"That's more wisdom, Badger, than you ordinarily display," Nick dryly declared, looking up at his swarthy, sinister face. "Make a good job of it, by all means, while you're about it."

"I'll do that, all right, Carter, and I have ample means at my command," Badger retorted.

"We shall see how ample they are."

"Is that so?" Badger turned like a flash. "Watch out from the back window, Freeland," he commanded. "This dick may have more on us than we know for. Make sure you are not seen."

"That last ain't necessary," said Freeland, with a growl while he hurried into one of the back rooms.

Glidden returned at that moment, bringing a piece of rope, and the rascals then proceeded to bind Nick so securely that self-liberation was next to impossible.

Sadie Badger coolly set up the table in the meantime and replaced the articles that had fallen to the floor. She no longer appeared disturbed over learning that this man by whom she had been duped was none other than Nick Carter. She seemed to feel, like her notorious brother, that he had invited his finish.

That none of the gang viewed the matter in any other way, appeared in the freedom with which they began to discuss the situation, without the slightest regard for the presence of the detective and what he might, by some remote possibility, accomplish.

"Now, Sadie, give it to me straight," said Badger, after Nick had been securely bound. "How did the dick fool you?"

Sadie Badger told him, concealing nothing.

"I've exposed the whole layout, Ben, and the bumper that queers the wheel," she said, when concluding. "There's nothing to it. We're up against it."

"Up against it be hanged," Badger declared, with a growl. "You've told me nothing that cuts any ice. He's got nothing on us for the job. We've got no blood on our hands, nor likely to have any, barring we put the greaser away to get his baubles. See here——"

Badger swung sharply around and confronted Gaston Goulard, who had been grimly listening to the disclosures the woman had made.

"What do you want of us?" he demanded. "Why are you here? What have you got up your sleeve?"

Nick laughed audibly, in spite of his threatening situation, causing Badger to turn and glare at him.

"That's a funny question," said Nick. "Haven't you any brains?"

"Brains?"

"Do you suppose I haven't sized up this business correctly?" Nick went on. "I can tell you what that rascal wants. He wants precisely what I have pretended to want from the woman. He will tell you precisely what I have told her. I deduced the truth and the probable move that that rascal would make, and I got in my work ahead of him. That's all there is to it—barring that you caught me in the act. But there'll be another side to the story," Nick pointedly added.

"What do you mean by another side?" Badger demanded, scowling.

"Wait and see!"

"You'll never see the other side of it," Badger returned, with a growl. "We've got you for keeps."

"Better men than you have threatened me," Nick retorted.

"They would have made good, too, with as much at stake as we have," snapped Badger.

"That's right," Goulard now put in coolly. "There is only one way to settle this business."

"What way is that—wait!" Badger broke off abruptly. "You come with us, Sadie. Look after the dick, Glidden, and see that he serves us no trick. I'll find out where we stand. I'll darn soon find out where we stand."

Nick could not hear the discussion that ensued in the back room. That it was along lines already indicated, however, which had shaped his own course and brought about his unexpected situation, he had not the slightest doubt.

Ten minutes had passed when the crooks returned, and it at once was obvious to Nick that they had come to an agreement with Goulard that was satisfactory to all concerned.

The face of the whilom merchant, who had been steadily going to the bad since his financial and social downfall, wore a look of mingled malevolence and exultation that spoke louder than words.

"Now, Carter, my turn has come," he declared, confronting the detective. "You've had your inning, and I'm going to have mine. You did all in your power to down me, but you have accomplished less than what I will hand to you. May the devil get me, body and soul, if I don't wipe you out of existence."

"As you did Batty Lang!" snapped Nick, so sharply that Goulard recoiled as if dealt a blow. "Ah, that hits the nail on the head, I see!"

"Little good it will do you to see that," snarled Goulard, pulling himself together.

"As for the devil getting you," Nick curtly added; "he'll get you, Goulard, whatever you do to me."

"Not before I have balanced my account with you and sent you to——"

"Cut that!" Badger sharply interrupted, turning after a brief talk with Sadie. "There'll be time enough for that after a shift to safer quarters. We must get the infernal dick out of this house. If his running mates know as much as he has stated, they may come looking for us."

"That's right, too, Ben," put in Sadie. "Shift him from this crib, and be quick about it."

"Get a move on, Glidden," Badger added, turning to the other. "Run over to the shed and see Jimmy. Send him with the truck. We'll have the dick ready in five minutes."

"And we'll have the truck here in less time," Glidden nodded, hastening from the room.

"Fix him so he can't yip, Knocker, while I open the way."

Badger also hurried from the room with the last, and Nick heard his receding steps on a back stairway.

With the help of Goulard, who appeared eager for a hand in any outrage upon the detective, Freeland hastened to gag and blindfold Nick, a proceeding viewed with malicious satisfaction by Sadie Badger.

Nick appeared entirely unconcerned, however, and offered no resistance. He wondered where he was to be taken. He knew from the remarks he had heard that it could be to no great distance, and he recalled the several old wooden buildings he had noticed between the house and the river.

"It must be to one of them," he said to himself. "Probably a more secret retreat of the gang, used in case of need, or a raid by the police. By Jove, I don't yet fathom how Goulard showed up so suddenly and in company with Badger. Nothing said by the two women denoted anything of that kind. Something must have come off to which I did not get wise. Possibly, Chick or Patsy will succeed in doing so."

Nick had not long to wait for the contemplated move. He heard Badger returning, and a moment later he was seized by the three men and carried down the stairway mentioned.

The afternoon then was waning. The dusk of early evening was beginning to gather. Another half hour would bring darkness—and what more Nick could only conjecture.

Presently he heard the opening of a door and felt a

breath of air from outside. He scented the odor of burlap, a quantity of which was quickly thrown over him, covering him completely, and he again was raised from the floor on which he had been briefly placed.

Nick then was carried only a few steps, however, when he felt himself deposited on a low truck. He could feel it sway slightly on its iron wheels. Then he felt it moving, gliding quickly away, leaving behind him the house into which he had ventured so confidently less than an hour before.

CHAPTER VII.

PATSY'S TRAIL.

As now must be inferred, of course, after his interview with Sadie Badger, in which appeared most of the conclusions at which he had arrived, Nick Carter had started out to locate the suspected gang after the discoveries made while in the Mantell residence. He also had assigned Chick and Patsy the task of hunting up Gaston Goulard, in which they were engaged while Nick was busy as described.

Nick had felt reasonably sure, in fact, that these several parties, whom he knew must have been in the Manhattanville house the previous night, and presumably under the circumstances which he shrewdly suspected—he knew they would come together sooner or later. His first move was to hunt them up, therefore, before they could learn how much he had discovered and suspected, and guard themselves against the steps he naturally would take.

The latter part of the afternoon found Chick and Patsy, both in a disguise of a rather sinister character, completing a round through several East Side stuss houses, known to be frequented at times by Connie Taggart, the murdered cracksman.

They were not seeking him, of course, but were looking for the man now known to have been one of the confederates the previous night—Gaston Goulard.

They reasoned, also, that they might discover others, or hear some remarks dropped that would supply a clew to the whereabouts of Goulard. In each of the stuss houses visited, therefore, both detectives had played briefly at one or more of the tables, while sizing up the other players and listening to what was said.

They were thus engaged about half past four, in the stuss house then run by Karl Ritchie, known to be a favorite haunt of ex-convicts and denizens of the underworld.

"There's one of them, now," Chick whispered to Patsy, when entering the place. "He has done time twice for holdup jobs."

"You mean Slugger Sloan?" questioned Patsy, glancing toward the table at which the gambler was seated.

"Yes, of course," Chick muttered. "There's a vacant chair next to him."

"I see."

"I'll take it, Patsy, while you play at one of the other tables. We'll look the place over very thoroughly, and then get out."

"I'm on," nodded Patsy, sauntering to another part of the room.

Very little attention was paid to either of them by the other players, and the man mentioned by Chick hardly noticed him when he took the next chair and began his play.

He was a stocky, muscular chap in the twenties, with a countenance evincing depravity and vice, also a taciturn and surly nature. The latter had plunged him into numerous fights, which had earned for him the nickname he was bearing, that of Slugger Sloan.

Chick had been playing less than ten minutes, however, and was apprehending no profitable results, when something occurred that quickly reversed his opinion.

He felt a hand touch the back of his chair, and then a woman who had just hurried into the place, bent between him and Sloan, to whom she whispered, yet not so low but that Chick heard her:

"Quit the game, Slugger. I've fixed it."

Sloan turned his shifty gray eyes upon her, but did not stir from his chair. The gambler's passion was the strongest in his evil nature.

"Will she see him?" he asked, scarce above his breath.

"Yes."

"When?"

"As soon as he can get there."

"Her crib, Moll?"

"Yes. Get a move on," Moll Damon whispered impatiently. "It's more important than this piking business. Go and send him up there. You know where to find him."

Sloan pushed his chips toward the dealer to be cashed.

"You hike home and stay there," he muttered to the woman. "I'll see him and set him going. Leave it to me."

Chick caught Patsy's eye and signaled for him to shadow the woman. Half a minute later he followed Slugger Sloan from the house. Moll Damon was waiting outside, on a corner, for the crook. They met again and talked for several moments.

Chick and Patsy watched them from the stuss-house doorway, the former stating what he had overheard.

"Why are you banking so strong on it?" Patsy questioned.

"Because I happen to know that Sloan and Taggart were good friends," said Chick.

"Gee! it may be then that Sloan was in the job last night."

"That's the very point."

"But whom is he going to see, and why——"

"Wait! We'll find out."

The couple had moved on and were crossing the street. The detectives shadowed them to a house in the next block, which both entered.

Five minutes later both emerged, in company with—Gaston Goulard.

"Eureka!" Chick quietly exclaimed. "I was right, Patsy. They're our men."

"It's Goulard, all right, as sure as blazes," chuckled Patsy. "The game certainly is breaking cover."

"They're going to separate. Goulard is going to leave them."

The three crooks were lingering briefly at the foot of the steps.

"Shall we shadow him?" questioned Patsy.

"You do so," Chick directed. "I'll follow Sloan and the woman. They may have more up their sleeves. They're a bad pair."

"Have you any suspicion where Goulard is going?" Patsy asked.

"A suspicion only," Chick nodded. "He is going to

the home of some woman, judging from what that jade said to Sloan. It may be to the home of Sadie Badger."

"In that case——"

"He's off," Chick interrupted. "Don't lose sight of him."

Gaston Goulard had abruptly left the couple and was hurrying away.

"So long!" nodded Patsy. "If I lose sight of him, Chick, I'll chuck my job."

Goulard was hastening toward Third Avenue, where he boarded a north-bound elevated train.

Patsy Garvan occupied the same car.

Twenty minutes later, without the slightest idea that he was the subject of an espionage, Goulard left the train and walked rapidly east. He brought up in the low section on the water front in which Nick Carter had arrived not more than half an hour before.

There were comparatively few people in the street, which made it necessary for Patsy to proceed quite cautiously. He crossed to the opposite side from Goulard, remaining some thirty yards behind him, and noted, with some surprise, that he began to appear suspicious when approaching the lower end of the street. He was on the same side as the long wooden block, of which Sadie Badger occupied the last dwelling.

Goulard was glancing sharply at the house, and once back over his shoulder. Upon arriving at the last door, moreover, he merely glanced at it and walked on, not stopping until he came to the river wall, and opposite a two-story building, on which was the lime sign previously mentioned.

"Gee! I wonder what that signifies," thought Patsy. "He's got something on his mind. He seems to fear that the house may be watched."

That, as a matter of fact, was precisely what Goulard feared, and he resolved not to enter the front door—which was the one and only reason why Nick Carter was discovered and caught by the gang a little later.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TURNING TIDE.

Patsy Garvan was right, as stated, in his interpretation of Gaston Goulard's movements, and he remained concealed in the doorway to watch him.

Goulard turned back after viewing the river and the near-by lime shed for several moments. He retraced his steps with the air of a man having no special business in that locality. But upon approaching the entrance to a narrow alley making in between the end of the block and an old wooden building, and seeing no sign of any person observing him, he darted quickly into the alley and disappeared.

"Gee! that does settle it," thought Patsy, at first impelled to follow him. "He thinks the Badger house is being watched. It must be that end house in the block, for he looked at that door when passing, but at no other. He must have decided to go in the back way. In that case—no, by gracious, I'll not follow him. I'll try to get that woman to help me."

The woman had just appeared at the basement dining-room windows of the next house. She had opened one of them and was setting a bucket of water on the ground outside, evidently intending to wash the window. She turned almost immediately and seated herself on the sill, with her feet in the room, and fished out two pieces of cloth from within.

Patsy made a short detour and crossed the street, then sauntered toward her. He judged from her looks that she was not a servant, also that she was possessed of no great means, which he thought would be to his advantage. He stepped to the window on the sill of which she was seated, touching his hat and saying politely:

"Pardon me, madam! Will you tell me who lives in this last house?"

The woman, thin-featured and careworn, turned and regarded him curiously.

"Certainly, sir," she replied. "A man and woman named Badger."

"Are you acquainted with them?"

The woman shook her head and smiled significantly.

"No, sir," she said. "I don't think I would care to be. Their reputation is not very good."

Patsy now saw plainly that the woman could be safely trusted. He drew a little nearer to her, displaying his detective badge and saying quietly:

"I am aware of it. In fact, madam, I know all about them. I am a detective, as you may see, and I am anxious to watch the doings of a man who, I think, is going into the back door of that house. Would you like to earn five dollars without lifting your finger?"

The woman laughed softly, with eyes lighting.

"I could use five dollars very nicely," she replied. "I don't often get an opportunity to earn as much so easily. I infer that you want something of me."

"I merely wish to use your second-floor back windows for the purpose of watching the man and that side of the house," Patsy informed her.

"Ah, I see."

"I give you my word that I will disturb nothing, and that no one will ever be the wiser," he added. "I will pay you in advance. Here is the money." He tendered it with the last, and the woman accepted it.

"I'm glad to get it so easily," she said, after thanking him. "As a matter of fact, sir, I would like to see those people cleaned out of the house. High jinks take place in there some nights."

"I think they soon will occupy other quarters," smiled Patsy significantly. "May I go in at once?"

"Certainly, sir."

"You need not come to the door. Just move a little to one side, and I will step by you and get in the window. Keep on with your work, please, so that nothing may be suspected."

"I will, sir."

Patsy easily passed the woman, stepping through the low window, and he then hastened up to a back room on the next floor, from a window of which he cautiously peered.

This crafty move was a wise one on his part, in that Glidden failed to discover the spy a little later.

Supposing, of course, that Goulard had gone into the house by that time, Patsy took a swift look at the surroundings outside.

There was a yard back of the Badger house, partly occupied by a wooden porch, the door of which was accessible from the alley mentioned. Beyond the alley was a narrow passageway between the rear walls of the near buildings, a passage running in the direction of the

river, and through which he could see a bit of the faded side wall of the lime dealer's building.

"Gee whiz! there's the rat, now," flashed suddenly through Patsy's mind. "He has not gone in, after all. He still is watching the house."

Patsy had caught sight of Goulard's head, thrust cautiously around the corner of a shed in the near distance. He was gazing at the windows of the Badger house.

Presently, after glancing sharply around, Goulard emerged from his concealment and approached the entrance to the porch mentioned.

At the same moment, giving Patsy a second surprise, he caught sight of a man coming rapidly through the passageway from the lime shed.

"Great guns! that's Ben Badger himself, the king-pin of his knavish gang," he said to himself, instantly recognizing the notorious gangster. "He's bound to meet Goulard in the alley. I wonder if that's been fixed."

That it had not been fixed was speedily apparent.

The two men nearly collided a moment later, plainly seen by Patsy, and the manner and looks with which both recoiled convinced him that the meeting was purely accidental.

Their surprise and consternation was of brief duration, however, for they quickly began to converse in low tones, though Patsy could only conjecture what they were discussing.

They talked in the alley for about five minutes, and Badger then led the way to the porch, where Patsy no longer could see them.

As a matter of fact, however, quietly entering the basement door of the house, Badger caught the sound of Nick Carter's voice, in discussion with Sadie, and the nature of the detective's remarks, coupled with the arrival of Goulard and what he had just stated, speedily exposed Nick's subterfuge and designs.

Patsy, waiting and watching, then saw Badger emerge from the porch and run at top speed through the passageway, and then disappear into the lime shed.

Half a minute later he returned posthaste, and followed by two men, whom he evidently had gone to get—Knocker Freeland and Jack Glidden.

All vanished hurriedly into the house.

"Gee! there's something doing, all right," thought Patsy, not for a moment supposing that Nick was in the house. "Badger got the gang together for some reason. It now is a hundred to one that all of them were in the Manhattanville house last night, and that some sort of a deal is to be made with Goulard. I'll wait here a while longer, at all events, and see what follows."

Patsy waited, constantly watching, but he did not hear the report of Nick's revolver, nor any sounds of the brief struggle that ensued.

He saw nothing more, in fact, until Glidden issued from the porch about twenty minutes later and rushed away to the lime shed.

"There goes one of them again," Patsy muttered. "There must be something doing over in that building, also, if the haste of that rat counts for anything. I'll wait and see whether he returns."

Patsy had not long to wait.

Glidden reappeared in about a minute, in company with a slender man in a blouse and overalls, both pushing a low truck.

"Gee! that's Jimmy Dakin, known as Quicklime Jimmy," thought Patsy, who knew most of the gangsters by sight. "He must be the rascal who runs that lime business. But what in thunder are they going to do with that truck? Have they killed Goulard? Are they going to truck him to the shed and then dump him into the river?"

Patsy remained to find out, if possible. He saw them bring the truck to the porch door, after which he could see neither them nor the truck, the porch cutting off his view.

Five minutes passed.

Patsy then saw them troop back to the lime shed—Badger, Goulard, Dakin, Freeland, and Glidden, hurrying like evil shadows through the narrow passageway.

Patsy saw, too, that they were dragging the low truck—with a long object on it, covered with burlap. He watched it—but did not see it move.

Within a minute all had disappeared into the lime dealer's building.

"Holy smoke!" thought Patsy, lingering only briefly. "Was that a corpse? If so—whose corpse? By Jove, I've got to make a bid to find out."

Hurrying downstairs, Patsy found that the woman had just finished washing her windows. He thanked her again for her kindness, cautioned her to say nothing about his visit, and then he hurried from the house.

As he emerged from under the front steps, where the basement-hall door was located, he walked almost into the arms of—Chick Carter.

"Great Scott! here's a stroke of luck," Patsy said impulsively. "What sent you here?"

Chick was nearly as much surprised as Patsy, seeing him come from the second house.

"I shadowed Slugger Sloan up here," he replied. "He left Moll Damon and came up here alone."

"Do you know for what, Chick?" Patsy asked eagerly.

"Not yet. He took a long look at this house and then went down and sized up that building with a lime sign on it."

"Gee! we must be in right. Where is he, now?"

"In a barroom around the corner. What did you learn in that house? You seem to have something on your mind."

Patsy hurriedly told his story, and Chick's countenance took on a more serious expression.

"By Jove, it may be that Nick was in that house," said he. "He may have got wise to something that sent him there."

"That's just what I think," Patsy declared. "I can see no other way of looking at it."

"There is only one course for us to shape, I reckon," said Chick, after a moment's thought.

"What's that?"

"We'll begin with arresting Slugger Sloan. He may throw up a squeal that will clinch our suspicions."

"My idea exactly," Patsy agreed.

"Come on. We'll lose no time in discussing it. We'll nail him at once."

They hastened around the corner mentioned, then sauntered into the barroom, as if with no more aggressive intent than to buy a couple of drinks.

Slugger Sloan was leaning against the bar with a glass of whisky in front of him.

Chick and Patsy pretended to be about to pass him, then the former turned quickly and seized the crook's arms, confining them to either side.

Patsy whipped out his revolver at the same moment and thrust it under the gunman's nose.

"Don't get gay, Slugger," he advised coolly. "We want you!"

Sloan scowled defiantly at both, but made no resistance.

"What's it all about?" he asked, with affected indifference, while Chick handcuffed him and removed a revolver from his pocket.

"What are you doing out here?" he asked, confronting him.

"Nothing special. Do I have to have a ticket to come here?"

"There is nothing in that kind of a bluff. This is Chick Carter talking to you, Sloan, and you'd better make a clean breast of it. What do you know about that Manhattanville murder?"

"Nothing at all about it," Sloan declared, but every vestige of color left his sinister face.

"Your looks give your words the lie, Slugger," Chick said sternly. "You were out there last night, and you had a hand in the job."

"You've got another guess, Carter," Sloan coldly asserted.

"Why were you sizing up Badger's house, then, and Dakin's lime building?"

"Was I doing that?"

"I saw you doing it. We know, too, that they were in the job."

"You're a couple of wise ginks," Sloan observed, with a sneer.

"You're not going to open up, eh?" Chick questioned.

"Not so you'll notice it."

"That's final, Slugger, is it?"

"What I say always goes," scowled the gunman.

Chick turned abruptly and pointed to a telephone on one of the walls.

"Get next, Patsy," he commanded shortly. "Call up the precinct station. Get a wagon and a dozen men here as quickly as possible. We'll raid that house and building on the jump."

CHAPTER IX.

THE LAST RESORT.

Nick Carter was not long in learning whither he was bound. The jostling of the truck over the uneven ground in the narrow passage between the buildings ceased in a very few moments.

Nick then felt himself rudely lifted from the truck and carried under cover. Through the burlap in which he had been wrapped he could detect the pungent scent of lime, which confirmed his earlier suspicions.

"They've brought me to that building close to the river," he said to himself. "The outlook isn't very promising, unless Chick or Patsy had picked up the trail of Goulard before he started for the Badger house. There is a reasonably fair chance of that, in which case——"

Nick's train of thought was abruptly broken.

Four of the ruffians had raised him again and were taking him up a flight of steps leading to the loft of the building. There they dropped him on the floor and removed the burlap with which he was half smothered.

Nick sat up and turned his shoulders to the near wall. Gazing around, he saw a large, unfinished room, partly filled with unopened barrels of lime. Cobwebs hung in festoons from the roof and beams. The only light came through two windows overlooking the river, the swash and swirl of which could be plainly heard.

Gaston Goulard came up the stairs at that moment and at once flashed a sharp glance around the dismal place. He then strode quickly across to one of the windows and looked out.

Nick and Ben Badger, also, guessed what the rascal had in mind, and the latter said, with a grim laugh:

"That would be out of the frying pan into the fire, Goulard. Better take chances with the police, than with the East River."

"I'm not looking to take either chance," Goulard replied, with a frown settling on his white face.

"There's no danger here," Badger said confidently. "This place is not suspected."

"Are the doors below securely locked?"

"The front one is locked and barred," said Dakin. "No guns know anything about the other, or the way of getting to it. You're safe enough here."

"Let Quicklime Jimmy alone to know what he's talking about," declared Badger, with another laugh. "Take that gag from the dick's mouth, Glidden," he added. "I want to talk with him."

The bandage already had fallen from Nick's eyes, and Glidden now removed the gag, enabling Nick to speak and breathe more freely.

Badger seated himself on the top of a barrel a few feet from the detective, regarding him with sinister scrutiny for a moment. He then said curtly:

"You see that we've got you, Carter."

"I have eyes," Nick replied.

"There is no loophole for you to slip through."

"I'm not looking for one," said Nick, with outward indifference. "When I decide to look, Badger, I may find one."

"Not on your life," snapped Goulard, approaching. "If I thought that, I'd put a bullet into you on the spot."

"You are quite capable of it, Goulard."

"You bet I am, Carter, in your case. If there is one man on earth whom I hate, you're the man."

"Better your hatred, Goulard, than your friendship," Nick said sternly. "Mr. Henry Mantell, your late partner in business, will vouch for that."

"Curse you, I——"

"Cut that!" snapped Badger, thrusting Goulard aside when he reached for a weapon. "You'll be given a chance to have your say a little later. Just now, Goulard, I'll do the talking with the dick."

Goulard drew back, white and frowning, and glanced again toward one of the windows.

"No, Carter, you'd find no loophole," said Badger, reverting to him. "The best we can offer you is a choice between the East River, a toss in the darkness through one of those windows, or a bed in a couple of feet of quicklime."

"I'll let you make the selection," said Nick coldly.

"No great choice, eh?" sneered Badger, grinning.

"None as far as I am concerned."

"Carter, you're a cool dick, all right. I suppose, if we were really pressed to do so, we would offer you something better," Badger slowly added, after a moment.

Nick eyed him narrowly, noting his altered tone.

"What is that?" he inquired.

"A chance to compromise."

"Not on your life!" cried Goulard hotly. "I'll not stand for——"

"You close your trap till I'm through," snapped Badger fiercely. "You then can have your say, but not till then! I run this gang, Mr. Goulard, and what I say goes. Now, Carter, what do you say?"

"To what?"

"To a compromise."

"What sort of a compromise?"

"That's easily stated," said Badger. "You agree to step out of this case with your assistants, keep your hands off of us and your mouth closed, and do nothing to expose us. In return, you get your liberty and——"

"Stop a moment," Nick interrupted.

"Well?"

"Suppose I consent to such a compromise, will you accept it?"

"Certainly," nodded Badger. "Why not?"

"Wouldn't you be taking a chance?"

"That you might betray us?"

"Exactly."

Badger quickly shook his head.

"Not the ghost of a chance, Carter," he said roundly. "I know you from 'way back. I'd take your word against the national house of congress. It's up to you, Carter, to——"

"Enough said, Badger," Nick interrupted. "I never in my life compromised with a crook for my own safety, and I shall not begin with you."

"But——"

"There aren't any buts, Badger," Nick thundered—not without a reason.

His quick ear, close to the wall against which he was leaning, had caught a faint sound, unheard by any of the others—the slight creak of a hinge on the passageway door at the foot of the stairs.

It told him on the instant that help was at hand. Bent upon covering the approach of whomever it might be, though he suspected the truth, Nick went on with augmented vehemence, his sonorous voice fairly drowning all other sounds:

"No, no, Badger, I never would consent to that. I am a servant of the law, a protector of society. My duty to both, my own integrity, the dictates of my conscience, every spark of manhood in my nature, all would forbid——"

"Oh, hang your conscience!" roared Badger, interrupting. "You'll get all that's coming to you, then! You'll get——"

He broke off as if suddenly tongue-tied.

He saw the heads and helmets of a crowd of men rushing up the stairs, men with revolvers in their hands and stern determination in their eyes, a great posse of police led by Chick Carter and Patsy Garvan.

Before he could find his voice, that of Chick Carter rang through the dismal loft:

"Hands up! We've got you, boys! Don't show fight if you want to live! There'll be nothing to it!"

"Nothing but the shouting!" yelled Patsy, as the detectives and the police bounded up and into the loft.

Their increasing numbers and display of weapons awed every crook save one—Gaston Goulard.

He vented a snarl like that of a cornered wolf. Turning like a flash, he darted to the window at which he had repeatedly glanced. He did not stop upon reaching it.

He dived straight through it, carrying away panes and sashes, and vanished on the instant in the gathering dusk outside.

Patsy bounded to the window and looked out.

He saw the splash of falling spray where the man had gone down in the black, swirling waters of the river. He waited and watched—but watched vainly.

No head rose to the surface—no form to tell that Gaston Goulard had not paid the price for his crimes.

The arrest and incarceration of the other crooks were easily and quickly accomplished. Sadie Badger already had been arrested, and was on her way with Slugger Sloan to the precinct station. All were in custody before six o'clock that evening.

In a room back of some lime barrels in a corner of the loft, was found not only Juan Padillo; gagged and bound hand and foot, but also the suit case and its contents—both held there by the Badger gang until they learned what course the police investigations were likely to take.

Nick Carter and his assistants had showed them much sooner than they had anticipated.

The story told by Padillo, whose relief and gratitude were utterly beyond expression, confirmed all of Nick's deductions from the evidence he had gathered.

It appeared that Goulard and Taggart, contemplating a burglary in the Mantell mansion, had come there to look over the ground on the very night Frank read the Vandyke letter to his wife and parents. The crooks overheard him, as Nick had suspected, and at once framed up the job to get Padillo and his war prize. Not sure that they remembered the letter perfectly, Goulard had stolen into the house one day, picking the lock of the desk and making a copy of the letter during the night, and successfully stealing out of the house the following morning.

While discussing their scheme with Sloan in a barroom a few days later, they were overheard by Ben Badger, who was in an adjoining booth. He at once framed up a job with his gang, or the men included in it, to get into the Manhattanville house before Goulard arrived from the vessel with his victim, and to get away with him and his suit case.

They broke into the house through the basement immediately after dark that evening, and before Taggart and Slugger Sloan arrived, who had come to aid Goulard in disposing of the Mexican. When they undertook this and Padillo realized his situation, he at once stabbed Taggart and started in to finish the others and escape from the house.

He would have failed but for the interference of the Badger gang, whom Padillo took to be friends because of their aid, and the fight ended precisely as Nick had deduced, Padillo going willingly with the Badger gang, only to later find himself helplessly in their clutches.

He stated that Goulard was the man who had shot Batty Lang, which confirmed an earlier prediction of the famous detective—that Goulard would sooner or later kill some one.

Nick referred to this prediction when discussing the case with his two assistants that evening, then added:

"Well, we got in our quick work, all right, and saved Padillo and his baubles. He will never be held for killing

Taggart. Whether Mantell and his partners in the jewel scheme will be able to hold the prize, or have a moral right to do so, is not for us to consider. It's enough for us that we shall be well paid for our work. As for Gaston Goulard—well, we shall see no more of him till the East River gives up its dead."

"That will be never, chief," declared Patsy. "Never in this world.

THE END.

In the next issue, No. 150, of the NICK CARTER WEEKLY, you will find a mighty interesting account of one of the famous detective's most baffling cases, namely, "The House of Fear; or, Nick Carter's Counterstroke." You will also find several short articles, together with an installment of the serial now running.

Sheridan of the U. S. Mail.

By RALPH BOSTON.

(This interesting story was commenced in No. 148 of NICK CARTER STORIES. Back numbers can always be obtained from your news dealer or the publishers.)

CHAPTER IX.

JACK O' DIAMONDS.

With a wide grin upon his beefy countenance, Mr. Jake Hines stepped into the real-estate office of Walter K. Sammis. "Hello, little one!" he said cheerily to the girl who sat at a typewriter in the outer office. "We're lookin' very charming to-day."

Dallas Worthington looked up from her work, and stared at him coldly. "I haven't time to listen to compliments," she said. "I'm very busy. And, besides, I told you the other day that I want you to keep out of here. You must be very thick-skinned, Mr. Hines, to persist in coming where you know you're not wanted."

The young man smiled affably.

"If I wasn't thick-skinned, my dear young lady, I wouldn't be a politician," he remarked. "The way I figure it, love and politics are pretty much the same sort of game. In both cases a feller has got to keep pluggin' ahead, refusin' to take 'no' for an answer, in order to succeed.

"When I want a thing very bad," he went on, "I always manage to get it. I keep right on tryin' until I do, and if anybody is foolish enough to get in my way they get crushed as flat as if a steam roller had gone over 'em. That's the kind of a live wire Jake Hines is, my dear."

The girl laughed scornfully. "What a terrible fellow you must be!" she mocked. "If I thought you could be as unscrupulous in love as I understand you are in politics, Mr. Hines, I should feel very much afraid of you. But let me tell you that there is one great difference between love and politics: In love the best man generally wins; in politics, from what I have heard, the reverse is usually the case."

As she spoke, she glanced at a solitaire diamond ring which flashed from the third finger of her left hand.

The young man looked at her admiringly. "Say, that's pretty clever of you. It sounds like a couple of lines out of a book. You can take it from me, though, Miss Dallas, that the best man is goin' to win in this case—and his name is Jake Hines."

His gaze suddenly fell upon the diamond ring. "Hello!" he exclaimed. "That's something new, ain't it? You wasn't wearin' that the last time I was here."

"Perhaps not," replied the girl coldly; "but really I can't see that it is——"

"I don't have to guess twice as to where you got it," broke in Hines eagerly. "It was that crook, Sheridan, of course. So that's where the money went to!"

Dallas flushed angrily. "What do you mean by that?" she demanded, in astonishment. "What money? And how dare you refer to Owen Sheridan as a crook?"

Hines grinned broadly. "Because it's the truth. I'm only callin' him what everybody else will be callin' him after the next edition of the evening papers comes out. That reminds me that I came here to tell you a piece of news which ought to interest you. I guess that you ain't heard yet that your letter-carrier friend Owen Sheridan was arrested two hours ago at post office X Y."

The girl turned pale. "Arrested!" she gasped. "For what?"

"Robbing the mails," Hines replied cheerfully. "He swiped a gold watch from a registered package yesterday, and pawned it for forty dollars. They found the pawn ticket in his trunk up at the boarding house."

Dallas stared at him incredulously.

"You don't have to take my word for it, little one," he said. "The evening papers will be on the streets soon, and you can read for yourself."

"Or, if you can't wait that long," he added, with a malicious smile, "why don't you put on that pretty picture hat of yours and take a run around to Branch X Y? The boys there will tell you all about Sheridan's arrest. The inspectors nabbed him right in the post office when he returned from the noon delivery."

Dallas leaned weakly against the tall back of her typewriter chair. She looked as if she were about to faint. "But, anyway, he isn't—guilty," she faltered. "He can't be guilty!"

Hines smiled sardonically. "Oh, can't he, eh? You won't say that, my dear girl, when you've read all the particulars. The post-office inspectors say they've got a mighty strong case against him. They're tickled to death to have nabbed him. There's been lots of mail stolen from Branch X Y of late, and they think they'll be able to put it all up to Sheridan."

His glance fell again upon the diamond ring which glistened upon the third finger of her left hand. "Say, if I was you I'd take that off," he said. "A nice girl like you don't want to wear jewelry that was bought with the proceeds of a larceny. It ain't decent. Take it off, and I'll get you a better one. I'll give you a diamond twice as big—if you'll promise to wear it on the same finger."

The girl's eyes flashed scornfully. "Thank you, but I much prefer to keep this one," she said. "It wasn't bought with stolen money. That's a falsehood. Owen bought it with money he'd been saving for a year. He told me so himself."

"Oh, indeed!" sneered Hines. "And you mean to say you're willin' to believe a fairy story like that? If I'm a judge of diamonds—and I rather guess I am—that there ring must be worth a hundred dollars if it's worth a penny. Do you suppose for a minute that a first-grade

carrier could save that much out of a six-hundred-a-year salary?

"And, besides," he continued, "I'll tell you somethin' that ought to convince you. There's several men employed at Station X Y who can testify that yesterday morning Sheridan was going among 'em tryin' to borrow thirty dollars. Would he have done that if he had a hundred dollars saved up?"

Dallas gazed at him in horror, unable to find words to refute this argument.

"Now, when did Sheridan give you that ring?" Hines inquired.

"Only last night," she answered simply.

The politician smiled triumphantly. "Well, there you are! It's as clear as daylight. We can prove that he was tryin' to borrow money from his comrades yesterday at the post office; yesterday evenin' he was so flush he could afford to buy a hundred-dollar ring. Where did he get the money?' By pawnin' the watch he stole, of course. What more proof could you want?"

"But forty dollars wouldn't buy a ring like this," declared Dallas hopefully. "If the watch was pawned for only that much, where did he get the rest of the money?"

"That's easy," retorted Hines promptly. "He may have had seventy when he tried to borrow the thirty. Perhaps he'd managed to save that much, or—what's more likely—perhaps he stole the balance from other letters. Or it may be that he bought the ring on the installment plan—paid forty down with the money he got on that watch, and agreed to pay the rest later on. If that's the case, the post-office inspectors will soon find it out when they interview the jeweler who sold him the ring."

"But the post-office inspectors mustn't know about this ring," gasped Dallas apprehensively. "You're not going to tell them, Mr. Hines?" Her tone was pleading.

"Well," said Hines hesitatingly. "I really ought to, you know. It's my duty as a citizen to give the authorities all the help I can. It would be wrong of me to keep it dark. The fact that Sheridan bought that ring only last night will probably be one of the strongest links in the chain of evidence they've got against him. It would be enough to convince any jury."

He paused and looked at her eagerly. "But I ain't got any wish to make things any harder for the young feller than they are already. He's a crook, and I ain't got any use for crooks; but I'd like to see him get off, for I know it would make you feel bad to see him in stripes. I'd do almost anything to prevent you from feelin' bad, Dallas. I'll tell you what I'll do, little girl. You promise me to take off that engagement ring, and wear one that I'll give you, instead, and I'll promise to keep mum.

"And not only that," he went on, "but if Sheridan's convicted, as he probably will be, even without this bit of evidence, I'll do my best to save him from goin' to jail. Us politicians has a lot of influence with judges, you know. I think I can manage to get him off with a suspended sentence. Is it a bargain, Dallas?"

"It is not!" she replied indignantly. "I'll keep the ring I have. I am still confident that it was bought with honest money. Go ahead and tell the post-office inspectors what you please, Mr. Hines. The chances are that Owen Sheridan has already told them about the ring himself. I feel quite sure that he has no wish to conceal the fact that he gave it to me. He's not a thief, and he'll be able to explain how he got the money."

Hines shrugged his shoulders. "You're very foolish," he said, as he backed toward the door. "Take it from me, you're doin' your carrier friend a bad turn. However, the other part of my offer still stands. When Sheridan's convicted, I'll use my political pull to get him off with a suspended sentence, provided you'll agree to shake him and marry me. Think it over, little one. It's a mighty generous offer. You ought to be glad to marry an honest man instead of a crook."

He walked up the avenue, whistling gayly, and ten minutes later entered the headquarters of the Samuel J. Coggswell Association, and climbed the stairs to the room marked "Director's Office—Private."

He was the only member of the club who was privileged to enter that room without first going through the formality of knocking on the door.

As he now closed the door behind him, turned the key in the lock, and stepped across the soft, thick Persian rug to the mahogany roll-top desk at which sat Samuel J. Coggswell, the latter swung around in his desk chair, and confronted him eagerly.

"Well, Jake?" he said.

"Everything's went fine, boss," replied Hines, with a grin, seating himself beside the desk. "Your scheme worked like a clock from start to finish. Sheridan was pinched at half past twelve, and is in the jug at this minute."

Boss Coggswell's face lighted up. "Good!" he said. "That is, I mean to say: What a pity that one so young should turn out to be such a bad egg! To think of a nice-looking, clean-cut young fellow like that having to go to jail almost makes me weep, Jake—almost makes me weep."

There wasn't a ghost of a smile upon the district leader's face as he uttered these words. On the contrary, his expression was so sad, so virtuous, that Hines might have believed that his master actually meant what he said if he hadn't known what he did, and if he hadn't noticed that all the time the boss was talking his ears were wiggling rapidly—a sure sign that Old Nick was at work inside that cunning brain.

"Let this be a lesson to you, Jake," Coggswell went on. "Let this be a warning to you, my boy—for you, too, are very young—never to do anything dishonest."

"Or never get gay with Boss Coggswell," chuckled Hines, looking at his chief admiringly. "You're a wonder!"

"And how does the young man take it?" inquired Coggswell, after a long pause.

"Very calmly so far," replied Hines. "He can't believe that he's in any danger of being sent away. Says it's a frame-up, and that he won't have any trouble in proving his innocence."

"Poor, misguided youth!" murmured the boss.

"He's got ex-Judge Lawrence to defend him," Hines went on. "As soon as the judge heard that he was under arrest, he went to police headquarters and offered to take the case for nothing."

"And what does the judge think?" inquired Coggswell, somewhat anxiously, for he knew that Mr. Sugden Lawrence, ex-justice of the supreme court, was one of the most able lawyers in the country.

Hines chuckled. "I got it from a friend at headquarters that the judge, havin' heard all the evidence, seems

to think that he's goin' to have a pretty hard time provin' his client's innocence."

A relieved smile came to Samuel J. Coggswell's face. "The judge is a smart man," he said. "I agree with him."

CHAPTER X.

A TANGLED SKEIN.

Ex-Judge Lawrence glanced at the card which the office boy handed to him. "Miss Dallas Worthington," he read aloud; "I don't know her, and I am very busy. Did she state the object of her call?"

"Yes, sir; she said it was about the case of Owen Sheridan."

The lawyer nodded. "Oh, yes, I recall the name now. Ask her to step right in, Robert.

"You are Mr. Sheridan's fiancée, I believe, Miss Worthington?" he said, as the girl entered the room. "Please be seated. You have come, I presume, to ask me what I think about this unfortunate case?"

"Yes," said the girl. "Do you think that there is any chance of his being guilty?"

"Well," said the lawyer, with a smile, "that's hardly a proper question to ask an attorney concerning his client. What dwo *you* think?"

"I feel sure that he is not," the girl declared stoutly. "No matter what evidence they bring against him, I can't not believe that Owen could be a thief."

"Humph!" grunted the judge, looking at her quizzically. "May I ask, Miss Worthington, how long you have known the young man?"

"About six months."

"And previous to that time you never even heard of him—didn't know that any such person as Owen Sheridan existed?"

"No, sir."

"Then what makes you so sure that he couldn't be a thief?" the lawyer demanded sternly. "Surely you cannot form a positive estimate of a person's character in such a short period as six months?"

"If I had never met him before yesterday, I should be just as confident of his innocence," declared the girl simply. "You only have to meet Owen once to realize that he is honest—that he isn't the kind of fellow who could do anything mean or dishonorable."

The lawyer's face softened. "My dear young lady, I agree with you heartily," he said. "I, too, took a great liking to the young man the very first time I saw him. I am not a man of quick impressions. Long experience has taught me that appearances are sadly deceiving, but there are some men whose personalities compel confidence and respect the minute you meet them. Owen Sheridan is one of these. I, too, am absolutely confident that he is innocent of this charge of robbing the mails. If I were not, I should not have undertaken his defense. I don't take criminal cases as a rule, and never when I believe the accused to be guilty."

"Then you believe that he is in no danger of—of being sent to prison?" asked Dallas quickly.

The lawyer's face grew very grave. "I am in hopes that young Sheridan's personality will impress the jury as favorably as it has impressed us; and, of course, I am going to do all I can to combat the sinister influences which I have reason to believe are back of his arrest; but, to be frank with you, Miss Worthington, I must admit that they have built up a startlingly strong case against him."

The girl winced. "A strong case!" she repeated, in a tone of dismay.

"Yes. You see, they found the pawn ticket for the watch in his possession. The post-office inspectors who went to search his room are ready to swear that when they opened his trunk, which was locked, they found the pawn ticket inside."

"But Owen didn't pawn the watch," declared the girl confidently. "Surely the pawnbroker——"

"The pawnbroker's clerk has identified Sheridan as the letter carrier who came into the pawnshop in full uniform at three-thirty yesterday and pledged a gold watch for forty dollars," said the lawyer, with a wry smile. "The watch has been identified by its owner as the one which was in the registered package."

A cry of startled surprise escaped from Dallas. "The pawnbroker's clerk must be mistaken," she gasped.

"I agree with you," said Judge Lawrence, "but at the same time he picked Sheridan out of a group of twenty other letter carriers without a second's hesitation. That is bound to have great weight with a jury."

The girl nodded in mournful assent. "Yes, I can see that. And what does Owen say, Mr. Lawrence? What explanation does he offer?"

"He denied that he was in a pawnshop at all yesterday."

Dallas looked relieved. "Then I believe him. I am sure that pawnbroker's clerk is lying, and so are those post-office inspectors. They are not telling the truth when they say they found the pawn ticket in Owen's trunk. They must have put it there themselves in order to make a case against him."

The lawyer shook his head. "I am sorry to say that I cannot entirely agree with you there, Miss Worthington. I think it quite likely that the pawnshop clerk is lying, as you say. I have already discovered that he is a friend of Jake Hines, a young man identified with Samuel J. Coggswell, who, I have reason to suspect, is behind this prosecution, or rather persecution, of your young friend.

"But as for the post-office inspectors," he went on, "I believe they are telling the truth. I have known both of them personally for several years. They are square, honest, fearless men. Not even a politician as influential as Boss Coggswell could persuade them to do anything crooked. I am thoroughly convinced as to that. If they say they found the pawn ticket in Sheridan's trunk, I am quite sure that such was the case."

"Then how did it get there?" demanded Dallas. "You say you believe in Owen's innocence."

"Somebody else put it there before the inspectors visited the house—somebody who is in this shameful conspiracy to railroad our unfortunate young friend to jail," declared the lawyer grimly. "And I believe I know already who that somebody was."

"You do!" exclaimed the girl eagerly.

"Yes. As I presume you are aware, Miss Worthington, Sheridan is not the only letter carrier who occupies a room at Mrs. O'Brien's boarding house. A young man named Smithers, also employed at Branch X Y, lives at the same address. He has the bedroom next to Owen's. He is a member of the Samuel J. Coggswell Association,

and a close friend of Jake Hines, Coggswell's confidential man."

"Ah!" exclaimed Dallas breathlessly. "Then, of course, it was he who put the ticket in Owen's trunk. He could easily have entered the room when Owen wasn't there, and slipped the piece of pasteboard through a crack without opening the trunk at all."

"Yes," agreed the lawyer; "doubtless that is how the thing was done."

He leaned back in his chair, and gazed up at the ceiling meditatively. "The whole wretched plot is perfectly clear to me," he said. "I can see every step those rascals took. First they got a man to send that registered package from a downtown post office—a liquor dealer named Warren. I met him this afternoon, and one look at the fellow served to convince me that he is crooked. The box was empty, of course, when he sent it; there was no watch inside. The package was addressed to a saloon keeper on Sheridan's route, and they timed the mailing of it so to make sure that it would arrive at Branch X Y during our friend's tour.

"Then, at half past three," he continued, "while Sheridan was on his way to deliver the package, one of Coggswell's emissaries—probably Jake Hines—went to pawnshop on the letter carrier's route, and pledged a watch—the watch which the perjurer, Warren, swears was in the registered package when he mailed it. The pawn ticket is next handed to Carrier Smithers, who is instructed to put it into Sheridan's trunk, so that it will be there when the post-office inspectors come to search the room."

"But why, if the inspectors are as honest as you say," demanded Dallas, "should they so quickly have suspected Owen? Why should they have gone straight to his room and opened his trunk? Doesn't that look significant?"

"A very sensible question, Miss Worthington. At first blush it does look significant, I must admit. But I have interrogated my friends, the inspectors, on that very point, and their explanation is satisfactory. They tell me that the reason they were so quick to suspect my client was because they learned that on that same day he had been trying unsuccessfully to borrow money from his friends at Branch X Y. Naturally that caused them to give him immediate attention."

"And what does Owen say about this story that he was trying to borrow money?" inquired the girl anxiously. "Does he deny it?"

"No; on the contrary, he admits it," replied Judge Lawrence, with a frown. "He was quite frank about the matter with the inspectors. He told them that he had a chance to buy a diamond ring at a great bargain yesterday. The ring was worth a hundred and twenty dollars, and its owner was willing to sell it for ninety. Owen had sixty dollars saved up, and tried to borrow the needed thirty from his fellow carriers. That was yesterday morning."

"And he bought the ring last night," sighed Dallas. "Where did he get the money? Hasn't he explained?"

"Yes. He says that yesterday afternoon, when he had given up all hope of being able to raise the cash for the ring, he unexpectedly encountered a prosperous friend, a Boston man named Cowan, whom he had not seen for several years. Owen declares that Cowan loaned him the thirty dollars."

"And he's telling the truth, of course," said Dallas. "Surely it ought to be easy to prove that, Judge Lawrence. All we have to do is to get this Mr. Cowan to corroborate Owen's statement."

The lawyer smiled sadly. "That is where fate has dealt our young friend a nasty blow. Sheridan is a most unlucky fellow. It ought to be easy, as you say, to get this man Cowan to corroborate his statement—but it isn't."

"Why not?" demanded the girl. "You don't mean to say that he denies it?"

"Not quite as bad as that," replied the judge, "but almost. Fifteen minutes ago, Miss Worthington, I telephoned to this man's hotel—Owen told me where he was stopping. The clerk informed me over the wire that Mr. Cowan died this morning of heart disease. My client's statement cannot be corroborated. Fate seems to be on the side of Samuel J. Coggswell and his rascally crew."

CHAPTER XI.

AN OFFER DECLINED.

As the day set for Owen Sheridan's trial approached, ex-Judge Lawrence grew more and more pessimistic as to the outcome. Although he was quite certain that his client was the victim of a dastardly plot, he realized that simply to make such an assertion in a court of law could do no good unless he was able to prove it to a jury's complete satisfaction.

He had obtained a bondsman for Owen, and the latter had been freed from a cell at police headquarters, and was able to take an active part in the preparing of his own defense.

Every day the carrier and his lawyer held long conferences, and went over every detail of the case, seeking in vain to find some weak spot in the chain of circumstantial evidence which his enemies had forged—some point in the "frame-up" which was open to attack.

In this endeavor, however, they did not meet with much success until one day Owen burst into the lawyer's presence with a joyous smile upon his face, and exclaimed excitedly:

"I've got an idea, judge, and I think it's a winner."

The lawyer listened attentively to what his client had to say, and when the latter had finished, jumped up from his chair and impulsively grasped the young man's hand.

"I congratulate you, my boy," he said warmly. "You are right; your idea is a winner. Your cleverness may save you from a term in jail. I am more confident now as to the outcome of this case.

"Be sure not to mention a word about this to a living soul," he went on, with a chuckle. "I want to spring it as a surprise. Whenever you meet any of Coggswell's bunch, pretend to be overwhelmed with despair. Make those fellows think that you are on the verge of a breakdown as a result of brooding over your impending fate. That will make the shock all the greater when we spring our little surprise on them in court."

Thus it happened that when, the following day, Jake Hines, on his way to the headquarters of the Samuel J. Coggswell Association, encountered Owen on the street, the latter looked so worried and cast down that Jake almost felt sorry for him.

Hines stepped into Boss Coggswell's private office at

the clubhouse a few minutes later, and told his chief about the meeting.

"That fellow looks like a ghost, governor," he declared. "He's scared stiff. I almost think that if he had the price of a steamship ticket he'd skip his bail and beat it."

Boss Coggswell waxed thoughtful at this remark. "Do you know, Jake, that isn't at all a bad idea," he said. "I refer to the suggestion you just made about the young man skipping his bail. If I thought that he could really be persuaded to do that I almost think I'd prefer to have things turn out that way. I have no desire to see the fellow sent to prison. If he became a fugitive from justice, it would suit our purpose just as well, it seems to me. All we want is to have him so utterly discredited that he'll be unable to do us any injury."

Coggswell had already used his political influence to have the trials of Carriers Greene and Tom Hovey for tampering with Judge Lawrence's mail put down at the bottom of the court calendar. His object in doing this, of course, was to have Owen Sheridan's case disposed of before these other cases came up for trial, so that the young man would be unable to implicate him—Coggswell—by telling what he knew about the conspiracy to pry into the ex-judge's private correspondence.

"Yes," the boss went on, his ears wiggling rapidly as he spoke, "I almost think I'd prefer to have young Sheridan run away. It almost breaks my heart to think of a nice young man like him having to go to jail. He has tried to injure me, 'tis true, but I hope I am not vindictive, Jake—I certainly hope I am not vindictive. If I thought that it was only the lack of the price of a steamship ticket which prevented him from leaving the United States, I think I'd loan him the money, Jake—yes, indeed!"

Hines pondered over this. He had heard of fugitives from justice sending for their sweethearts to join them in some remote portion of the globe where there was no extradition treaty with the United States government. But Dallas Worthington did not impress him as being the kind of girl who would respond to such an invitation. On the contrary, she probably would accept the fact of the letter carrier's flight as conclusive proof of his guilt.

If Sheridan stood trial, was convicted, and sentenced to jail, the girl, believing that he had fallen an innocent victim to circumstantial evidence, might still remain loyal to him; but if Sheridan ran away, he would no doubt by such a craven act lose the love of Dallas forever. Thus thought Jake Hines, and consequently he decided that Boss Coggswell's plan was a good one.

"I think you're right, boss," he said. "It would be a mighty good idea for us to finance a little trip abroad for that feller."

"But it must be done very carefully, Jake," said Coggswell. "Remember, we have Judge Lawrence to deal with—a mighty shrewd lawyer. If he managed to implicate me in this young man's flight, it would place me in a very painful position. It is essential that I remain an anonymous philanthropist, Jake."

"I'll look out for that, boss," Hines assured him. "I'll work it so that it can't possibly be brought home to you. I know a way."

Half an hour later Hines stepped into the real-estate office of Walter K. Sammis. Dallas Worthington looked up from her typewriter, and frowned her disapproval of her visitor.

"If you don't leave here immediately," she began indignantly, "I'll call Mr. Sammis——"

"Hold on there, little one!" he interrupted blandly. "I know I ain't welcome here, but don't go up in the air before you hear what I got to say. If you don't let me get it off my chest, you'll be sorry. I've come to tell you something about that letter-carrier friend of yours—something that'll help him."

The girl hesitated. "Well, hurry up and say it," she said coldly. "I'll listen."

"I met Sheridan on the street a little while ago," said Hines, "and he looked so bad that, honest, I couldn't help feelin' sorry for him."

"He doesn't need your pity," declared Dallas scornfully.

"Maybe not," said Hines; "but at the same time he's got it. It almost made my heart bleed to see him lookin' like that, and I made up my mind that I'd like to do something for him."

The girl received this declaration with an incredulous laugh; but, unheeding this, her visitor went on: "I've got a little money saved, girlie—a couple of thousand dollars that I don't need just now. If you think your carrier friend could use it, he's very welcome to it."

Dallas looked at him in great astonishment. This generous offer quite took her breath away. Her tone was a little less hostile as she said:

"Why, that's very kind of you, Mr. Hines; but I don't think Owen—Mr. Sheridan is in need of money."

"I reckon he is," replied Jake, with a grin. "I know very well that he ain't got a dollar to his name. I don't like the feller—he's a crook, and I ain't got any use for crooks—but at the same time, as I say, I feel sorry for him. And, besides, he's a friend of yours, and any friend of yours, little one, can command Jake Hines' bank roll. So you tell him the next time you see him that if he can use a couple of thousand he's welcome to it."

With these words he hurried out of the office, satisfied that he had succeeded in his mission.

"It's sure to work," he said to himself as he walked back to the club. "From the look on that guy's face, I'm sure that it's only the lack of funds which prevents him from beatin' it. As soon as he learns that there's a chance for him to get hold of enough dough to make a safe get-away he'll grab at it quick."

When Dallas saw Owen a little later she repeated to him what Hines had said, and the young man, greatly mystified, went to report the incident to his friend and counselor, Judge Lawrence.

"What on earth does it mean, judge?" he inquired. "What is their game in offering me money?"

The lawyer laughed. "It is very clear what their game is, my boy. They are in hopes that you are in such terror of the coming trial that you can be tempted to seek safety in flight. The two thousand dollars is intended to pay your expenses."

Owen frowned; then his face suddenly lighted up. "Say, judge, I've got another idea. Couldn't we make great capital out of this offer? What's the matter with my accepting this money from Hines, in the presence of concealed witnesses, then exposing the whole game? The very fact that they are trying to induce me to jump my

bail ought to be enough to prove that they are behind this conspiracy."

Judge Lawrence smiled. "I was thinking of that, but it wouldn't work. Those rascals are too smart to lay themselves open to a trap of that sort. That is why Hines went to Miss Worthington instead of making that offer direct to you.

"You see," he went on, "while we can readily guess their motive, they haven't said anything that would incriminate them. Hines simply offered to lend you some money, which might be taken as a philanthropic and disinterested act on his part. He did not suggest that the money be used to defray the expenses of your flight. He would claim that he thought you might be able to use it to defray the expense of your defense.

"And, besides, you can rest assured that if you agreed to accept the money, Hines wouldn't be so careless as to make out the check to you. He would make it out to Miss Worthington. There's nothing criminal in a man lending or giving a couple of thousand dollars to a young lady whose friendship he ardently seeks. That's the answer which they would make to an attempt on our part to make capital out of the incident."

Sheridan realized the logic of this, and Hines' offer was turned down flat.

Boss Coggswell was greatly disappointed when his lieutenant reported to him that the letter carrier had refused to avail himself of this opportunity to seek safety in flight.

"It is too bad," he sighed. "I would have preferred to let this unfortunate young man down easy. He has chosen unwisely. A sojourn abroad is much more pleasant than several years behind bars. But since he refuses to accept my aid," he went on, those expressive ears of his wagging rapidly, "I'm afraid he'll have to go to jail. Yes, Jake, as much as it pains me to have to say it, I am quite certain now that he'll have to go to jail."

CHAPTER XII.

ON THE STAND.

Boss Coggswell was not present in the courtroom when Owen Sheridan's case came up for trial. Not that he was not interested, nor was it a feeling of delicacy which kept him away; but he realized that his presence might excite comment and lend color to the accused man's assertion that he was the victim of a conspiracy.

"You'll be there, of course, Jake," he said to his subordinate, "and I'll rely on you to bring me the news just as soon as a verdict is reached."

Hines grinned. "Yes, you can bet your boots, boss, that I won't lose any time gettin' here with the glad tidings. I guess you're right in decidin' not to be present. It'd look pretty raw for you to go to court. No use takin' any unnecessary chances."

"It isn't that, Jake," replied Coggswell deprecatingly. "It isn't that, my boy. I have no reason to be afraid. When one's conscience is clear, one doesn't have to worry about what people might think. But the fact is, Jake, I have a tender heart—you ought to know that by this time—and I could not bear to be present to witness that poor man's sufferings."

Hines grinned again, and looked at his chief admiringly. "All right, boss," he said. "You wait here, and I'll bring you the news as soon as the jury brings in a verdict."

Hines had not the slightest doubt as to what that verdict was going to be. He felt confident that the evidence against Sheridan was so crushingly conclusive that the jury wouldn't hesitate more than three minutes before deciding that he was guilty.

If he had any apprehensions on the subject they would have been dispelled by what he had seen that morning. He had encountered Owen on the street, walking arm in arm with Judge Lawrence, and if ever two men looked worried, the accused carrier and his counsel did.

"Poor gink!" said Mr. Hines to himself. "I guess he's sorry by this time that he didn't take that money and beat it while he had the chance. Wonder how he'll look in a suit of stripes and with his hair close cropped."

There was a broad grin upon his face as he entered the courtroom and seated himself on one of the rear benches. Catching the presiding judge's eye leveled sternly upon him, and suddenly realizing that his levity was hardly decorous, he hurriedly assumed a serious mien.

He found it difficult to refrain from chuckling as the case progressed, however, for as witness after witness took the stand to testify against Sheridan, and the strong chain of circumstantial evidence was presented link by link to the jury, the prisoner's counsel, eminent lawyer though he was, seemed to become more and more baffled and depressed.

Ex-Judge Lawrence was famed for his skill as a cross-examiner. This was the only point on which Coggswell and Hines had been apprehensive. They feared that there was a possibility of some of the witnesses going to pieces under the vigorous, searching questioning of counsel for the defense.

But, to Hines' great relief, the ex-judge, in this case, gave no evidence of being an expert at the art of cross-examination. He did not succeed in "rattling" a single witness; in fact, he handled them all so mildly and apparently with so little spirit that Hines muttered to himself contemptuously:

"Huh! Him a great lawyer! Guess he's been very much overrated. Why, I know a whole lot of ordinary police-court counselors that could give him cards and spades."

William Warren, wholesale liquor dealer, was the first witness to take the stand. He testified that he had sent his good friend Michael Harrington, a saloon keeper, a gold watch by registered mail. He had placed the watch in the package in the presence of two witnesses, who had also been with him when he handed in the package at the registry window of a downtown post office.

Judge Lawrence asked this witness but four questions in cross-examination:

'Are you acquainted with Samuel J. Coggswell, Mr. Warren?"

"I never had the pleasure of meeting the gentleman."

"Are you acquainted with a young man named Jake Hines—a prominent member of the Samuel J. Coggswell Association? Before answering this question, Mr. Warren, let me remind you that you are under oath."

"It ain't necessary to remind me of no such thing," retorted the witness indignantly. "Yes, I know Mr. Hines. I am proud to say that he is a good friend of mine." He glanced across at the spectators' benches, and Jake smiled at him an acknowledgment of this compliment.

They had expected this question, knowing that it was the accused carrier's hope to be able to make the jury believe that he was the victim of a conspiracy. They had decided that Warren should tell the truth, and admit that he knew Hines. To have denied the fact would have been dangerous. There was no telling that the defense did not have witnesses at hand ready to take the stand and swear that they knew of the friendship.

"Yes, I know Jake Hines," the witness repeated, almost belligerently; "but that don't——"

"Did you meet him, or in any way have communication with him, on the day you sent the registered package?" interrupted counsel for the defense.

"Yes," replied the witness unhesitatingly. "Mr. Hines came to my office that day. He was in the neighborhood, and he dropped in to make a social call."

This question, too, had been expected. Warren had made up his mind to answer it truthfully, for it was quite possible that Hines had been seen entering his office.

"And at that meeting between Hines and yourself, Mr. Warren," counsel for the defense went on, "did either of you say anything about this watch which you were going to send to Harrington?"

"Not a word," emphatically replied the witness, who was prepared for this question also. "Not a single word, sir. We never spoke about the watch at all. Hines didn't know that I was going to send it."

As the conversation which had taken place that day between Hines and himself had been behind a closed door, with no chance of anybody having overheard them, Warren felt that he was quite safe in making this denial.

"That's all," said the cross-examiner, with an audible sigh, and the witness, as he stepped down, exchanged a triumphant glance with Jake Hines.

The next witnesses were the men who had been in Warren's office when he placed the watch in the package, and who had accompanied him to the post office and seen the package handed in at the registry window. Both of them were reputable business men, and Owen's lawyer made no attempt to impeach their testimony. In cross-examination he let each of them off with but a single question, which was the same in each case:

"On the way to the post office, where did Mr. Warren carry the package in which you had seen him place the watch?"

"In the left-hand pocket of his coat," the two witnesses both answered.

Michael Harrington, the saloon keeper, testified that the package contained no watch when he opened it; which statement was corroborated by several witnesses who had been present in the saloon when the accused postman brought in the registered package.

Harrington made a good impression on the stand. He denied that he knew Jake Hines, except by reputation, and volunteered the information that he had "no use for Sam Coggswell, or any of his bunch," being himself of the opposite political party. Hines could not help grinning at Judge Lawrence's evident discomfiture.

The pawnbroker's clerk, an exceedingly nervous young man, who took the stand and swore that Owen had pledged the watch for forty dollars, was cross-examined at greater length than any of the previous witnesses.

Counsel for the defense, however, could not shake his testimony. He admitted that he was acquainted with Jake Hines, but denied that the latter had been in the pawnshop that day, or had held any conversation with him regarding the watch. Another audible sigh came from Judge Lawrence as this witness left the stand.

The two post-office inspectors testified to having found the pawn ticket in Owen's trunk, and a half dozen of the employees of the Branch X-Y took the stand and reluctantly stated that Carrier Sheridan had tried to borrow thirty dollars from them that day.

Owen's counsel did not attempt to cross-examine any of those witnesses. As the last of them left the stand and the prosecutor announced that this closed the government's case, Jack Hines leaned back in his seat and smiled expansively.

"Let 'em beat that if they can," he muttered confidently. "I can see from the looks of the jury that they've made up their minds already."

TO BE CONTINUED.

HE WANTED TO KNOW.

It was customary with the French marshal, Bassompierre, when any one of his soldiers were brought before him for heinous offenses, to say to him: "By heavens, brother, you or I will certainly be hanged!" which was a sufficient indication of their fate.

A spy, being discovered in his camp, was addressed in these terms; and next day, as the provost was carrying the culprit to the gallows, he pressed earnestly for leave to speak with the marshal, alleging that he had something of importance to communicate.

The marshal, being made acquainted with his request, exclaimed, in his customary rough and hasty manner:

"It is the way of these rascals; when ordered for execution, they pretend some frivolous story, merely to reprieve themselves for a few moments. However, bring the dog hither."

When the culprit made his appearance, the marshal asked him what he had to say.

"Why, my lord," replied he, "when I first had the honor of your conversation, you were obliging enough to say that either you or I should be hanged; now I come to know whether it is your pleasure to be so; because, if you won't, I must, that's all!"

Needless to say that the rascal was pardoned.

HE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND IT ALL.

An Irishman, who was terribly afraid of ghosts, got a berth on board an American vessel.

As the ship was leaving the port, he asked one of the sailors if there were any ghosts on board.

One of them, for a joke, said it was as full of ghosts as a churchyard.

This frightened Pat so much that when he turned into his hammock he drew his blanket so far over his head that his feet were left naked and cold.

He endured the suffering for a few nights, and then he went to the captain and complained about his blanket.

"Please, sor," said Pat, "my blanket is too long at the top and too short at the bottom, and sure, I even cut a bit off the top and sewed it onto the bottom, but, faith it's just the same as iver it was. I can't understand it at all—at all."

THE NEWS OF ALL NATIONS.

A Kangaroo Cat.

Mrs. Pussy Cat, who lives at the home of Thomas Evans, in Newport, Ky., is greatly worried over one of her offspring. No other member of Mrs. Cat's numerous family is like the newcomer. This kitten has only two feet and walks or hops about like a kangaroo. There are only tufts of fur where the front legs ought to be. In hopping about, the kitten balances itself with its tail, which it uses as a sort of rudder.

Gets Fifty-dollar Tip for a Shave.

Jack O'Reilly, barber in West Third Street, Los Angeles, Cal., had the surprise of his life a few days ago. A prosperous-looking man walked into the shop. When the job was done, the patron unlimbered a wad of bills, stripped off a fifty-dollar yellowback, and said: "Things have come my way handsomely. Here's a bit of a tip."

Leaving O'Reilly stupefied with astonishment, the man walked out. He was a prosperous Los Angeles stock broker, O'Reilly said.

Asks $500 for Loss of Faded Army Uniform.

On the loss of a faded blue army uniform, a relic of the Civil War, Mrs. Mary Heintzelman, seventy-three years old, of Minneapolis, Minn., bases a claim for five hundred dollars against Hennepin County, which she has already filed.

Five years ago Mrs. Heintzelman went to the Hennepin County poor farm. Her only possessions were packed in an old-fashioned trunk. In the top tray lay the old uniform and a packet of soldier's letters, written on the heavy blue stationery used in war times. They were the only links that bound the old woman's life to the highest happiness her life had known.

The uniform, more than half a century ago, had been worn to the war by George Heintzelman of the Forty-seventh Pennsylvania infantry. They had been betrothed, she and the young soldier, when he marched away to war. The memories of those days when he and she were young have been the only comforts in the old woman's life.

Three years later Heintzelman came back, badly wounded. He recovered, but a bullet through his lung had impaired his health. They were married, and moved West. The husband's health did not improve. A few years later he died.

Mrs. Heintzelman stored the old uniform and the letters in the trunk and set about to make her own way in the world. The years that followed were lonely and full of hard work and trouble. The treasures in the trunk were the only solaces in the woman's life.

Finally, too old to work longer, she went to the home. Every spring, on the anniversary of the day that her lover had marched away, Mrs. Heintzelman would take out the old uniform and hang it on the line to air. Softly she would caress the faded garment and read over the old letters, and her sadness and loneliness would be lost in the flood of pleasant memories that floated back from her youth.

A week ago, as the old uniform hung upon the line, a cinder descended from a smokestack. It smoldered for a moment in the garment, flared up, and Mrs. Heintzelman's last treasure was gone forever.

Blasted Romance of Poor Aunt Emily.

When board of health inspectors of Indianapolis, Ind., went to the home of Emily Smith, a recluse, to remove piles of dust-covered books and papers which literally filled her little house, they uncovered a hidden fortune and unearthed a story of a blasted romance.

Fifty years ago the woman was a belle in the English settlement in New York City and was preparing to be married, when the man who had won her was stricken with fever and died.

She moved to Indianapolis twenty-five years ago, and, residing in a slum district, has been an object of charity for many years. About eight thousand dollars was found secreted in the house, which was cleaned only after the indignant woman had shrieked in protest.

The following is the supposed pauper's riches: Currency, $846.07; certified check, $200; bank deposits, $1,800; mortgages, $5,000, and insurance papers of undetermined value.

"There is nothin' there you'd want to see, and, besides, it would kill Aunt Emily if you disturbed her papers," a negress told the officers.

"This is my home; it's none of your business what I have beneath these papers!" Miss Smith shouted, as the officers started to move the newspapers and pamphlets.

Fighting Man's Square Meal.

Charles Weber, a pugilist from New York, while in a cell in Philadelphia, Pa., on a charge of forgery, having been brought here from Moyamensing Prison, told Turnkey Gordon, of the Thompson Street police station, that he hadn't eaten for a week; that he was as hungry as a polar bear, and wouldn't Gordon please get one dollar from his money in the sergeant's desk and take his order for a square meal? Gordon did.

Ten minutes later Gordon faced the house sergeant with a wry face. "What do you think of that fightin' guy?" he asked. "'E said ez 'ow 'e wanted a square meal; and sent me out fer a dollar's worth of cream puffs, and blow me if 'e didn't eat every bloomin' one of 'em."

Answers the Call of Cupid.

After having answered nearly four million calls, Miss Theresa Cox, chief telephone operator at the Minnesota State House, has fallen victim of Cupid, and given up her job. For ten years, ever since the capitol was completed, Miss Cox has guarded the switchboard day in and day out, the personification of efficiency and amiability, and long years ago gained the reputation of being a model telephone girl.

On ordinary days she made between one thousand and twelve hundred wire connections. When the legislature was in session, or in other times of stress, the demands

on her switchboard were greatly increased, and she would be called over the lines sixteen hundred times or more.

No one ever applied for her job, and she probably was the only one in the capitol whose job was not in danger. The uncertainties of political positions had no fear for her, for no governor ever could have thought of removing Miss Cox. There would have been a storm of protest akin to a riot.

But what governors could not do, Henry Jopling accomplished. He invited Miss Cox to marry him, and Dan Cupid advised her to surrender.

"I'm awfully sorry to leave here," she said to a gathering of State House officials and employees who gave her a wedding "shower," and her voice shook a little. "You have all been so kind to me."

Old-time Circus Man's Will.

William Washington Cole, an old-time circus owner, at one time of Cole Brothers and later a part owner in the Barnum & Bailey show, left an estate valued at five million dollars, according to his will filed with Surrogate Daniel Nobel in Queens County.

Mr. Cole died in Whitestone, L. I., March 10th. He left a widow, but no children, brothers, or sisters. Distant relatives live in England and in Scotland.

He left to his widow, Mrs. Margaret Cole, two hundred thousand dollars and two-eighths of the residue after the bequests are paid. Mrs. Cole is also to receive certain specific bequests. Sixty-five persons receive bequests and annuities aggregating about five hundred thousand dollars. The will also makes bequests to churches and institutions to the extent of one hundred thousand dollars.

Transcontinental Pedestrians.

In competition with Edward Payson Weston, the veteran walker, and to win a fifteen-hundred-dollar prize offered by the Panama-Pacific Exposition, Mr. and Mrs. Tom Jackley are walking across the country, with the requirement that they "make" the capital of each of the forty-eight States within three years. They left San Francisco September 12, 1912, and seem sure of winning, as they are now in the East, and have four months to reach Augusta, Maine. They are forbidden to ride in any way, and may obtain money only by selling pictures of themselves.

Gets $7,000,000 from Uncle.

Using the name of Albert Brown nearly cost Albert James Bourne, a transient farm hand, a fortune of seven million dollars, left him by an uncle who died several months ago in Melbourne, Australia.

After a search through seven States, Bourne was located on a farm near Lincoln, Neb., by private detectives who had been hired to search for him. It was discovered he had been in a hospital in St. Joseph, Mo.

The property left him consists of 339,000 acres of free land, 25,000 sheep, 400 horses, hundreds of cattle, and 50,000 pounds sterling. Bourne is Irish, and fifty years old.

Sues Farmers, but Vanishes.

Two years after filing suit against wealthy Howell County farmers of the South Fork, Mo., neighborhood, whom he accused of slanderous statements concerning himself, the whereabouts of Wiley C. Goldsby, the plaintiff, are unknown, and caused the dismissal of the suit, which had been taken to Ozark County on a change of venue. Goldsby was last seen when he left for the Kansas wheat fields.

After Goldsby had been in charge of the ranch house of Doctor R. A. Sparks for some time, stories were circulated in the neighborhood that he was a woman masquerading in male attire. It was said he often wore a kimono when preparing breakfast for the ranch hands, and devoted his spare time to crocheting and other fancywork. It was these statements that Goldsby made the basis of a suit for heavy damages.

University Student at Ten.

Helen Bradford, of Ottumwa, Iowa, ten years old, has made arrangements to enter the University of Iowa in September.

She was graduated from high school, and is heralded as one of the best mathematicians among grade students of the State. She will be the youngest girl to attend Iowa in more than ten years.

Cupid Tricks Truant "Cops."

Cupid has had Minneapolis, Minn., school-attendance officers dodging around corners in pursuit of children under sixteen who were not attending school, only to have them flash a marriage license. This has happened several times during the present school year, and school-attendance officers are getting vexed at Cupid.

The law is that children must attend school until they are sixteen, unless they have completed the elementary-school course. However, attendance officers have given up the chase after the truants when it has been proved they have been married.

Teressa Amundson, Alida Sandeen, Ruth Rosendahl, Lillian Jordan, Agnes Gratz, and Alice Hanson are the girls who have abruptly ended their education by the marriage route and had attendance officers guessing.

Fight Lake of Burning Oil.

Recently, citizens of Oilton, Okla., and neighboring towns witnessed the most extensive oil fire that has ever occurred on the river since the field opened. It was one mile northeast of the town, on the Cimarron River, where the oil had formed a lake in the bend of the stream. It burned for hours, sending up a column of smoke and flame that was noticeable from towns twenty miles away.

William Murdoch, traffic manager of the Oil Belt Terminal Railroad, headed a squad of men who prevented a spread of flames, which would have been disastrous to the big railroad bridge.

He Helped to Found Republic of Texas.

J. W. Darlington, ninety-four years old, of Austin, Tex., is the only person now living who heard the sounds of the guns at the battle of San Jacinto, seventy-nine years ago.

Mr. Darlington was one of the band of Texans who met and defeated the Mexicans under Santa Anna, but was prevented from fighting in the battle itself by being detailed to look after the supply train.

Mr. Darlington came from Virginia to Austin in 1839, the year that Austin was laid off as a town, and the first capitol was built. He married Miss Eleanor J. Love in 1843, and has four daughters and one son living. He is an honorary member of the Daughters of the Republic,

and still takes an interest in affairs of the State. His chief delight seems to be recalling his life in Texas in the early forties.

In the battle of Plum Creek, in 1840, Mr. Darlington, at the head of about two hundred citizens, whipped the Comanche Indians so that they gave the early settlers no more trouble. He was also engaged in a battle at Plum Creek in 1842.

Mr. Darlington helped to plane the logs for the first capitol during Lamar's administration, and also to build the fort around the capitol, to protect it from the Indians on one side and the Mexicans on the other. The capitol was then used not only for the sessions of Congress, but as a church, school, opera house, dance hall—in fact, for all public gatherings.

Rounded "The Horn."

Vanburen Crompton, of Allen Dale, Ill., is one of the few men living who went to the California gold fields by way of "the Horn." Most of the emigrants went overland by wagon, enduring many hardships. Mr. Crompton, then a young man, with two companions chose the water route. Taking a boat at New Orleans, they followed along the Mexican and South American coast, rounding Cape Horn, and then up the western coast, to San Francisco. The ships in that day were slow, and it required many weeks to make the journey. Thousands of men were called westward by the lure of gold, but only a comparatively small number found riches. Mr. Crompton was among the unlucky ones, and returned home after six years. He now lives on the farm on which he was born, and in one of the first frame houses erected in southern Illinois. In the early days there was a fort near the farm, a refuge from the Indians.

Still Another "Pick" to Feed.

Former President Roosevelt's fear of race suicide would have received a rude shock had the colonel been in the front office at the Young Men's Christian Association in Nashville, Tenn., when "Bee," a crippled porter, and quite a fixture at the building, asked for a day off.

"What in the world do you want with a day off, Bee?" asked one of the secretaries to whom this request, coming from Bee, was something unusual.

"Well, suh," said the old negro exultantly, "Ah have a visitor at mah house dis mawnin'. It's de nineteenth, suh. Ah shore has a hard time to sport 'em, suh. Eatin's am high and money am mighty procrastinatin'."

Bee's request was granted.

"Up, You Dead!" Cry Saves the Trench.

A French lieutenant, now lying wounded in a Paris hospital, has given this account of the thrilling action in which he received his injury:

"We were fortifying a trench which we had taken. Behind a barrier of sacks which blocked one end of it, two sentinels kept careful watch. We could work in all security.

"Suddenly an avalanche of bombs tumbled down on our heads. Before we could recover, ten of our men were stretched on the ground, dead or wounded, pell-mell.

"I opened my mouth to urge them on again, when a stone from the parapet, torn out by a projectile, hit me on the head. I fell unconscious. My stupor lasted a second only. A splinter of shell tore my left hand, and the pain brought me to.

"As I opened my eyes, weakened, my mind benumbed, I saw the 'boches' jump over the barrier of sacks and invade the trench. There were about twenty. They had no guns, but they carried in front of them a sort of wicker basket filled with bombs.

"I looked to the left. Our men had gone, the trench was empty. The boches advanced; a few more steps and they were on me.

"Just then one of my men, lying on the ground, a wound on his forehead, a wound on his chin, blood streaming from his face, dragged himself to a sitting position, seized a sack of grenades near him, and cried out: 'Up, you dead!'

"He pulled himself to his knees, dived into the sack, and flung the grenades at the group of assailants.

"In answer to his cry, three more wounded men dragged themselves up. Two of them, who had broken legs, took guns, and, opening the magazines, started a rapid fire, each shot of which hit home. The third, whose left arm was inert, seized a bayonet with his right.

"When I picked myself up, having quite recovered my senses, about half the hostile group had been felled, the rest having retreated in disorder.

"All that remained was a huge, perspiring suboffice, congested with rage, who, leaning against the barrier, protected by the iron shield, continued most courageously, I must say, to fire his revolver in our direction.

"The man who was first to organize the defense, who had cried, 'Up, you dead!' received a bullet straight in the jaw. He collapsed.

"Suddenly the soldier with the bayonet, who for some minutes had been crawling from corpse to corpse, stopped about four feet from the barrier, drew himself up, dodged two bullets fired at him, and plunged his bayonet into the German's throat.

"The position was saved. The wounded soldier's sublime appeal had resuscitated the 'dead.'"

Alleged Dead Man Denies the Report.

Once upon a time the city editor of a newspaper printed a story about a man being dead who wasn't dead.

Much to his consternation, the man arose the next morning and read a lurid account of his death. He pinched himself to see if he were dead or alive, and, coming to the conclusion that he was very much alive, after looking at a black-and-blue mark where his fingers had closed together upon his tender flesh, he sought the city editor.

"I read in the morning paper that I was dead," he remarked to the newspaper man at the desk.

"Well," laconically responded the city editor, "what about it?"

"I am here as a living witness to testify that I am not dead," responded the man who was printed dead, "and that the reports of my death are very much exaggerated."

"I want you to understand here and now that if this newspaper says you are dead, you are dead," retorted the city editor.

"But don't you see that I'm very much alive?" queried the astonished dead man.

"All right," replied the city editor, "we'll put you in the birth column to-morrow morning."

Well, there is a parallel case to this in Montana, as is

shown in an opinion by the State supreme court, written by Associate Justice Sanner.

Frank Lemmer, a taxidermist, was the object of an obituary notice in the Great Falls *Tribune*, W. M. Bole's newspaper. The notice had him dead, and dead to rights, because of an overdose of morphine, administered upon a prescription by a physician, but evidently the *Tribune* made the mistake of not putting Mr. Lemmer in the birth column the next morning, although it explained later that Lemmer had arisen from the dead, with due apologies to the supposed dead man.

Now, Lemmer objected to being called a "dead one," and promptly instituted suit against the *Tribune*, claiming that he was not dead, and that his business as a taxidermist had been injured by the alleged malicious publication that he was dead.

Naturally, the defendants demurred both generally and specifically, which demurrer was sustained by the Cascade District Court. The plaintiff thereupon declined to plead further, and suffered judgment of dismissal with costs. Naturally an appeal was taken.

Justice Sanner, Chief Justice Brantly, and Associate Justice Holloway concurring, calls attention to the inference contained in the publication of the alleged death of Lemmer.

"The necessary inferences are," says the opinion, "that Frank Lemmer died; that he died from an overdose of morphine; that the morphine was procured on a doctor's prescription, which prescription was obtained at Lemmer's instance by a stranger. None of these circumstances, nor all of them, suggest anything disgraceful or criminal."

The opinion then proceeds to say that it is no disgrace to die, and that one may die without moral turpitude from an overdose of morphine procured by a doctor's prescription, even though a stranger acted as messenger in the transition.

"Speaking generally," continues the opinion, "there is no doubt that one may suffer such damages from almost any publication whatever, particularly a publication to the effect that he is dead; but whenever such damages are sought, it is not enough to aver generally that in consequence to the publication the plaintiff has been damaged in his business; the facts showing such damages must be alleged or no cause of action is stated."

The opinion then proceeds to show that the demurrer to the complaint was properly sustained, and the judgment is affirmed.

"Movie" Mysteries Are Here Explained.

Rumbling bass notes from the unbridled, unleased piano. Thunderous roars from the big bass drum. Frequent crashes of brassy cymbals. You instinctively clap your hands to your ears and breathlessly await the bursting of the awful tornado that is scurrying over your head.

Then comes a pause in the deafening and ominous roar—the house is so still you can hear the clicking of the projecting machine as the film is reeled off.

Yes; we are in the midst of a fearsome forest, and the heroine is just about to merge from the inky blackness with all her troubles—there she is, now!

What was that? A flash of lightning! The drummer redoubles his sonorous roll, endigg with a wild, spine-stiffening thump. Some storm. The heroine's hair is blown so violently you fear it may be torn out by the very roots.

She falls to the moss-grown forest floor. Livid flash and another thunderous roll. Then the deluge. The heavens open, and while the fanfare is loudest and the lightning is liviest, our fair lady is soaked to the skin with real water and falls to earth, beaten down by the very force of the torrent from on high.

Great scene, that!

Come with us now and see how the game is played. Ah, the movie studio!

Here's a patch of nice green grass on the studio floor, and back of it a few shrubs and some sizable trees. Up on a scaffold high enough to be out of the camera's ken are a dozen men, each armed with a huge watering pot.

The heroine stands on the side lines, waiting for the storm to begin. Storm in broad noon of a sunny day? Sure thing. Just watch.

An excited-looking individual holding a bunch of manuscript stands beside the heroine—yes, you've guessed it, he's the movie director.

She gets behind the trees, and the man at the camera crank starts turning. She pushes her way through the tangled wildwood and stubs her toe, looking unutterable anguish the while.

"Down stage!" yells the excited director.

She staggers on as directed, the camera man cranking nonchalantly with one hand while he takes puffs at a cigarette with the other. The poor girl tries to rise, and wabbles feebly.

"Fall in front of the camera!" bawls the director.

She falls at the proper focal distance.

"Stretch out your arms—look wild!" yells the boss of the works.

"Let her go!" this time to the men with the watering cans.

And poor heroine, struggling and staggering, is drenched to the skin with the downpour, not from the heavens above, but quite as wet.

But, we ask, where is the lightning for this wild outburst of the aforesaid Nature.

"Oh, that's easy!" laughs the director. "We put that in afterward with the scratch of a pin."

"But how are you going to make it look like night?"

"Easier still—we'll tint the film blue. Got to have sunlight to take any kind of pictures, anyway."

So, when you see this thrill, remember that the lightning is a pin scratch, and the night effect is blue aniline dye and not by the gloom of night. As for Jupiter Pluvius, the men with the cans of water can wet down the place with equal skill.

Have you ever witnessed an exciting scene about a big building—a home or a factory—and then, in the next reel, watched it go up in smoke and flame? Yes? Some expense? Not so very much, for you haven't seen the real building burn down at all, but only a little model of it after the scene has been acted out in front of the real building.

"The best fire effects are made in the studios, anyway," the movie expert will tell you.

It was in a studio that the eruption of Mount Etna was manufactured. The promoters had tried taking real moving pictures of the volcano in eruption, but they were not nearly as good as the studio-made variety. These had the verisimilitude of real life, with fleeing thousands, men, women, children, and animals, pouring down its red-hot

sides. The films of the fleeing people were merely superimposed on the film of the fake volcano, studio made.

You have seen your favorite heroine jump unhesitatingly off a tall cliff? Or swim an ice-choked river? You never knew she could swim. Nor does she. Another movie trick is what you have seen. Movie stars seldom do such things. Professionals, dressed exactly as they are, and made up to resemble them, do this part of the stunt for the real actors. Jumping from a burning building is another movie feat which is only a trick. The real people get only as far as the windows. Dummies do the jumping and the falling.

So! But how do they make inanimate objects move about as if they were endowed with life? How does a catsup bottle jump up from the table and climb down to the floor on the rungs of a chair? Or how can grandpa's clock walk up the stairs, turning around solemnly the while to look you straight in the eye and give you warning of the flight of the hours?

Perhaps you have seen horses running full tilt at you and never seemed to catch up. So simple! Right in front of the horses is a high-powered automobile, in which the movie camera is set up. The horses follow the car, and the camera man grinds out his film, always keeping a few feet ahead of his charging subjects.

Prehistoric Man Now Seen in Wax.

The three great links in the chain of human ancestry in America, beginning nearly twenty thousand years back, have just been represented for the first time in scientifically reconstructed wax faces at the College of Medicine, University of Nebraska, in Omaha. This is the first reconstruction work of the kind that has been done on prehistoric skulls of America.

Scientists are enthusiastic over the three great types it has brought out on the skulls of modern Indian, the cave-dwelling cannibal of three thousand years ago, and the Nebraska "Loess man," fragments of whose skull were deposited with the glacial drift when the Missouri River bluffs were made, between ten thousand and twenty thousand years ago.

For eight years the skulls of the low-browed Loess man, found by the archeologist, Robert F. Gilder, of Omaha, have remained in the museums in Omaha, Lincoln, and at Harvard University, while science has hopelessly longed to know what a face this preglacial man must have worn.

Finally German scientists worked out an accurate system of facial measurements compiled into an elaborate table, by the use of which faces can be faithfully reconstructed over skulls. To date little has been done along this line in Europe. In America the first work in building up faces of prehistoric man has just been completed by Miss Myra Warner, clay-model artist, who has made a specialized study of this German system in the art schools of the East.

Miss Warner was handed the three skulls by Doctor Charles W. M. Poynter, professor of anatomy of the University of Nebraska. She was told nothing about the origin of the skulls. She worked faithfully for months, and, with the aid of the table of measurements, built up the three wonderful faces. It was not until she had nearly finished that she discovered one of the three to be a modern Indian type. Yet, without knowing she was working on a modern Indian skull, by applying only her table of measurements faithfully to the skull as she built the clay upon it, she produced so characteristic an American Indian type that Doctor Poynter declared the accuracy of her work on the other two skulls, equally unknown to her, could by no means be called into question.

The cannibal cave-dweller type is that of which Mr. Gilder found remains in sunken cave homes along the Missouri River. He has uncovered some forty of these caves, and has established the fact that the inhabitants belong to what is known as the "round-headed" branch of the human race. Geologists believe the inhabitants of these caves thrived some three thousand years ago.

But the chief interest in the reconstruction work at the University of Nebraska attaches to the face that has been built over the skull of the Loess man. In all, the fragments of but six skulls belonging to this type are in existence to-day.

This extreme primitive type of man is believed to have stalked over the wastes of North America before the glaciers plowed their great gorges and before they deposited the Kansan drift and the Loess clay to build the bluffs at the Missouri River. This man, low-browed and of little brain capacity, lived contemporaneously with the mammoth or mastodon, which he probably slew for food, if indeed he could wield a stone weapon sharp enough and strong enough to pierce the thick hide.

And yet, now that the faces have been reconstructed, we find no close resemblance to the ape type, as many of the most excitable scientists have expected. "The truth is," says Doctor Poynter, "if man sprang from the same original stem as the ape, the ape branch sprang off so far back in antiquity that none of the skulls of the missing links could possibly be expected to withstand the weathering to the present day. No one will ever find a skull that will carry man back even anywhere near the ape days, and the remotest skull we can find is already very much a man's."

This Loess man then belongs to an age perhaps hundreds of thousands of years later than the time man and ape parted company and began to develop along different lines.

Yet this Loess skull has, by competent geologists and ethnologists been placed next in age to the famous Neanderthal skull found in 1856 in a cave in the valley of Neander near Dusseldorf, Germany. The Neanderthal skull is known the world over as representing the great antiquity and low order of the human race. In brain capacity the Loess skull boasts little, if any, advantage over the Neanderthal.

The prominence of the supraorbital ridges or bony brows is, next to the receding character of the forehead, the most notable feature of this primitive type.

"Neither the projections of the supraorbital ridges, nor the receding forehead, is an Indian characteristic," says Henry F. Osborn, professor of zoölogy in Columbia University and curator in the American Museum of Natural History. Doctor Osborn was one of the first to go to Omaha and study this remarkable skull when it was found eight years ago.

The age of this skull is established by its association with the layer of clay drift in which it was found. Doctor E. H. Barbour, head professor of geology of the University of Nebraska, went over the ground thoroughly and helped to excavate many of the fragments of the Loess man some ten miles north of Omaha.

"From the geologist's standpoint," says Doctor Barbour, "these bone fragments were not buried. Instead, the bones were doubtless deposited with the Loess, the age of which may be safely reckoned at ten to twenty thousand years or more, and the bones are at least as ancient as this formation."

Somewhere in its mighty course the glacier picked up these fragments of skulls and a few arm and leg bones and rolled them along with the rest of the drift, to be deposited solidly in the Loess clay when the bluff was built.

Old Paymaster Says Farewell.

Amos Hershey has just retired as postmaster of Gordonville, Pa., ending a period of fifty-five years of service for the United States postal department.

In 1860, before the Civil War, Mr. Hershey, then sixteen years of age, entered the employ of John K. Smoker, in a general merchandise store. At the same time he became one of the clerks in the post office. Five years later Hershey purchased the store business from Smoker and was himself appointed postmaster. He received his commission from William Dennison, postmaster general under President Lincoln.

The efficiency of the post-office department in that day was very crude toward what it has become in later years. When Mr. Hershey first entered the service, there were no railway mail cars. In fact, it was only in 1860 that an arrangement was made with the railroads to run a mail train between New York and Washington, the only advantage of which was the quick transfer of mail matter from one large place to another. The traveling post office, where mails are assorted when going at fifty miles an hour, had not yet come.

It was several years later that a Mr. Davis, of the St. Joseph, Mo., post-office force, broached the thought that considerable valuable time would be saved if the overland mail could be sorted on the cars, and made up for offices at the end of and along the routes. The department allowed him to carry out this idea, which, starting in such a humble way, is now one of the most important branches of the department.

Before the "catcher" on the mail cars and the "crane" at small stations came into use, twenty years later, the process of catching and delivering the pouches was indeed strenuous, both for the mail clerk and the local postmaster. Shortly before train time, Mr. Hershey mounted a platform immediately alongside the track, and, propping his feet securely, would suspend the mail pouch in front of him at arms' length, the right hand at the top and the left hand at the bottom. When the train neared this human crane, the mail clerk appeared at the door of his car, and, securing himself firmly, would extend his right arm in the form of a crook or an acute angle, and catch the pouch as the train rushed by. The mail clerk had his arm well padded to prevent serious injury; but, notwithstanding, the risk was exceedingly great—in more ways than one. Mr. Hershey states that the mail trains were running at the rate of fifty miles an hour, and it is hard for the uninitiated to comprehend the alertness and strenuosity connected with the delivering and catching of the pouch, aside from the constant danger.

They had a very complex system in making up letter packages in those days. Mr. Hershey had to sort the letters for each office separately, no matter whether there would be only one letter for an individual office. The letters for each office had to be placed in a paper jacket of Mr. Hershey's own making, completely inclosing the letters, and the name of the office address written plainly on the wrapper, with a waybill attached to each package.

In the early sixties the postmasters enjoyed the franking privilege, being allowed to send all their private mail without the use of postage stamps. This privilege was rescinded in 1864.

Mr. Hershey recalls a story of one of the railway mail clerks, who were known in the early days as the "paper jerkers," and how he increased his salary: "On a side lot near the Forepaugh circus grounds in Philadelphia, there was a faker, whose outfit consisted of the stake-and-ring game. The simple and enticing amusement was played as follows: The stake was placed in the ground at a certain angle, which led the uninitiated to believe that it was easy to throw the five-inch rings over it. The feat was almost impossible. The faker had a crowd around him, and was raking in the dimes—three 'tries' for ten cents—when a black-mustached, middle-sized man walked up and said he'd bet a dollar he could put three rings out of five over the stake.

"The faker winked at the crowd, and took the man up. The black-mustached stranger threw five rings rapidly, one after another, and, as three of them went over the stake, the thrower was in eighty cents. Then they bet ten dollars even that nine out of the first ten thrown could not be put over the stake. The whole ten settled safely, and the faker, as he handed over ten dollars in silver, said:

"'I'm broke; what's your business?'

"'I'm a paper jerker on a postal car. I don't do anything but fling papers all day long into the mouths of fifty sacks.'"

The village of Gordonville in those early days of Mr. Hershey's postmastership had two names. The section lying north of the railroad was called Concord, and that section lying south of the railroad was named Gordonville. The railroad station was Concord, but the post office has always gone by the name of Gordonville. The village was named after Daniel Gordon, who was the first citizen and who built the first houses in the town.

Child Labor Bill is Signed.

Governor Brumbaugh, of Harrisburg, Pa., signed the Cox child-labor bill. The new act will become effective on January 1, 1916. Under its provisions, children under fourteen years of age, with the exception of newsboys, will be barred from working at any occupation.

Messengers employed between eight p. m. and six a. m. must be at least twenty-one years old, and children under sixteen will be prohibited from working unless they attend schools at least eight hours a week. Domestic servants and farm laborers are exempt.

Sheds Her Artificial Legs.

Removing both of her artificial legs and pulling herself up to the railings of the Ohio River bridge, Anna Wartenbaker, thirty-five years old, of Parkersburg, W. Va., plunged ninety feet into the river here.

People on both sides of the river saw her plunge, and hastened to her in boats. Her right arm was broken in the fall. The woman was despondent over her crippled condition, and came here with the express purpose of leaping to death from the bridge.

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